

American Girl

November/December 2004

\$3.95

Holiday **Fun**
with Your **Family!**

10 Tips for
Feeling Good

Take a
Friendship
Quiz!

Make Clever
Gifts!

Plus!
See our
story contest
winner!

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Facts Book**

See AG Online!

Visit americangirl.com
to peek behind the scenes
of AG magazine!

Always get a parent's permission
before surfing the Web or giving out
your full name, address, or any
other personal info.

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About the Cover

Meet Jordan L., age 11. We asked her what she likes best about the holidays:

The smell of peppermint or the smell of pine trees? The smell of peppermint
Baking cookies or eating them?

Baking them. I love to cook.

Mittens or gloves? Gloves

Giving gifts or getting them?

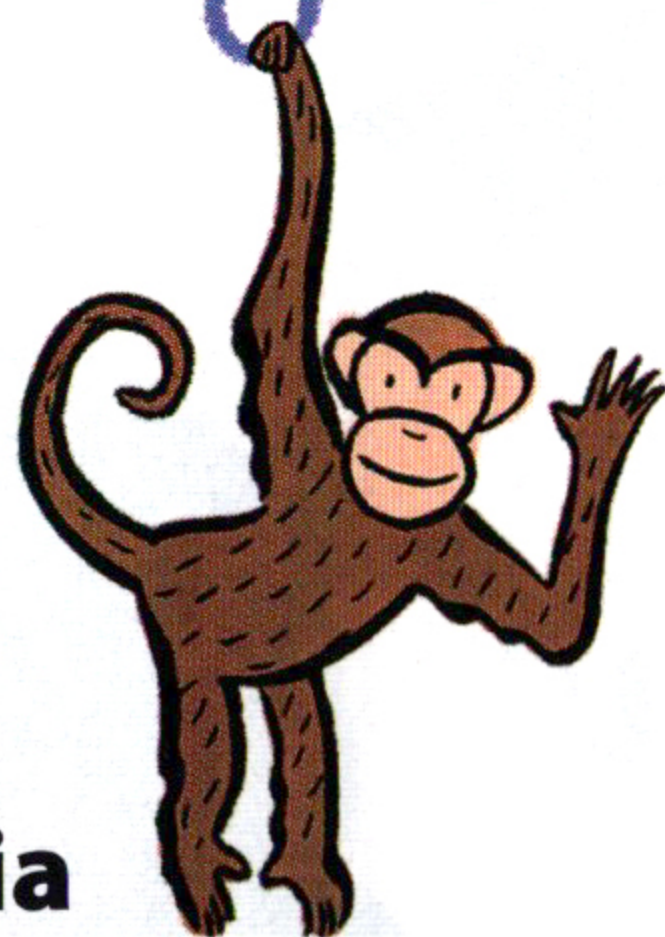
Giving them, of course!

Jordan L.

To see more pictures from our photo shoot, go to "Behind the Scenes" on page 49.



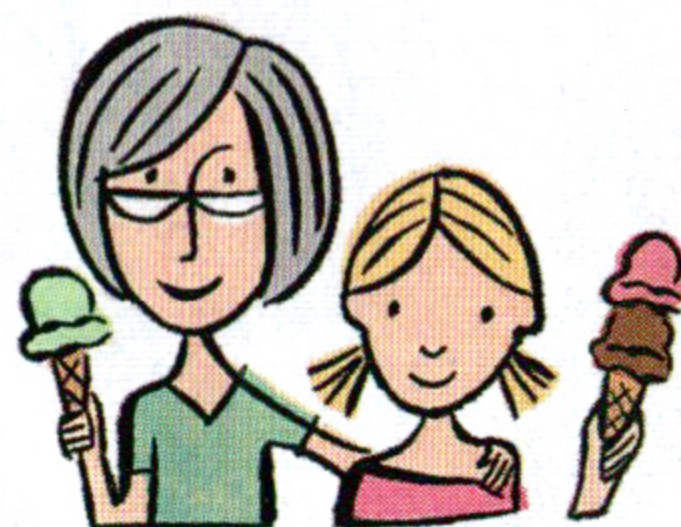
Letters from You



Monkey Mania

Thank you for the big poster in July/August 2004. Monkeys are my favorite animal, and people who see the poster in my room always say, "That's so Mandy!"

Manoy M.
Age 13, Indiana



Jumbo Fun

Your jumbo July/August issue was awesome! Right after I got it, I went to my grandma's for two weeks. We filled our time with crafts, treats, moneymakers, splashing, and so many other fun things. Your ideas kept me away from the jaws of boredom!

Olivia C.
Age 11, Maryland

Win It!

On page 29, you'll read about our latest Win It! contest. To enter, send a postcard by December 15 with your first and last name, address, and phone number to:

Win It!—N/D 04
American Girl magazine
8400 Fairway Place
Middleton, WI 53562



Small World



I loved your July/August article "Big Hearts, Small World" about the girl who visits the U.S. from Belarus. My neighbors also host a girl from Belarus, and I showed her the article. She was happy to read about a girl just like her!

Joni A.
Age 10, Kansas



Write to Us!

Want to drop us a line? Write us at:

American Girl magazine
8400 Fairway Place
Middleton, WI 53562

You can also send letters via e-mail to **im_agmag_editor@americangirl.com**. Either way, be sure to include your first and last name and your birth date. We can't use every letter we receive, but we read and learn from each one.

Official Rules

1. Drawing not open to employees of American Girl and its affiliates.
2. Only one entry per family.
3. To be valid, all entries must be received by mail by December 15, 2004. Entries may not be faxed or e-mailed.
4. All entries become the property of American Girl and will not be returned.
5. Void where prohibited by law.



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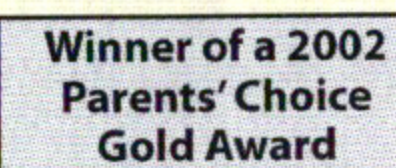
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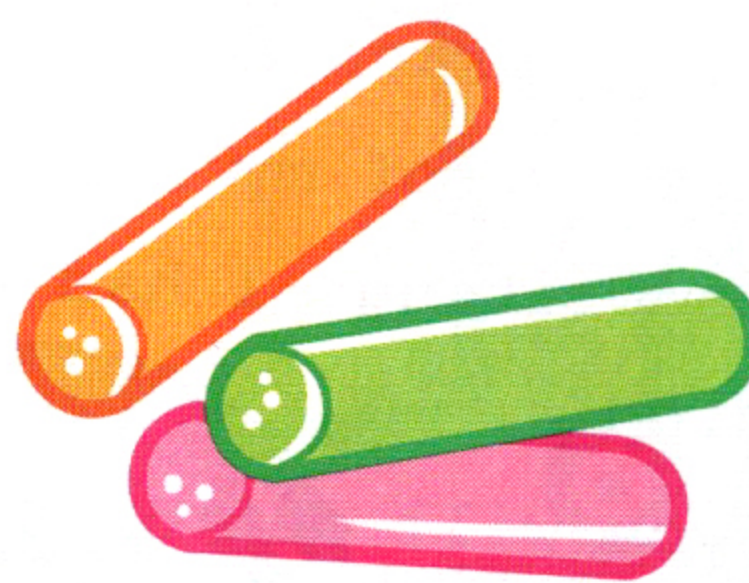


American Girl®

Girls

E X P R E S S

The Art of Giving



Hanna S. makes art to make a difference.

Last year, the 11-year-old Wisconsin girl made a New Year's resolution to use her artwork to help other kids. After a family brainstorming session, Hanna started her own greeting-card business.

"I never really thought I could do this," Hanna says.

Hanna creates pastel and charcoal drawings. Her mother scans them into a computer and takes them to a copy center to have the art printed on card stock. The cards sell at stores in Hanna's hometown, at craft shows, and by word-of-mouth.

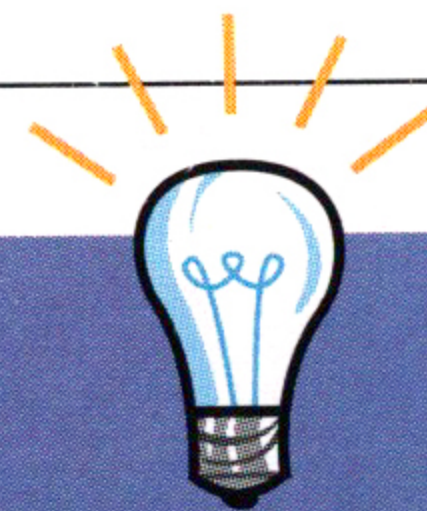
Proceeds go to a therapeutic horseback-riding center for kids with disabilities and to a place that helps abused children. So far, Hanna has donated more than \$400 to these charities.

"It makes me so happy," Hanna says. "I really like kids, and it's an amazing feeling to be able to help them."

Hanna's cards celebrate holidays, birthdays, and other special events.



Photo: Henry A. Kosholek/The Capital Times



Did You Know?

You'll flip for these fun facts!

Tinsel Towns

All but one of these towns are real places. Can you guess which name we made up?

- * Christmas, Florida
- * Mistletoe, Oregon
- * Noel, Missouri
- * North Pole, Alaska
- * Rudolph, Wisconsin
- * Santa Claus, Georgia

Answer is on page 42.

Buzzword pandemonium



How to say it:

pan-duh-MO-nee-um

What it means: Wild uproar

One way to use it: Madison discovered that a rush of holiday shoppers created pandemonium at the mall.



The buzzword is tucked somewhere into this issue of *American Girl*. Can you find it? Answer is on page 42.

Find It!



Look for fun facts sprinkled throughout the magazine!



True Story

Gracie B. has the write stuff—she won a handwriting contest!

Dear American Girl,

I've been practicing my cursive handwriting, and this year I won a national contest! More than 130,000 students in first through eighth grades entered the competition.

My school thinks handwriting is very important and makes a big deal out of it. Even though my entry was sent in for the contest (there can be only one entry per grade), there are many excellent writers in my class. And this year, there were four other state champions in my school!

To prepare for the contest, I practiced handwriting a lot. My teacher circled ten letters out of my handwriting book every week. Using my best handwriting, I had to write two lines of the letters he circled.

Handwriting is something you will definitely use during your life. Computers are very helpful, but you can't always type whenever you want. With writing, all you need is a pencil and a piece of paper.

Sincerely,

Gracie B.

Age 12, Minnesota



P.S.
My favorite letter to write is the cursive capital D.

Holi-Doodles

Use an easy mitten shape to create cute holiday characters.

An upside-down mitten becomes an adorable dog.



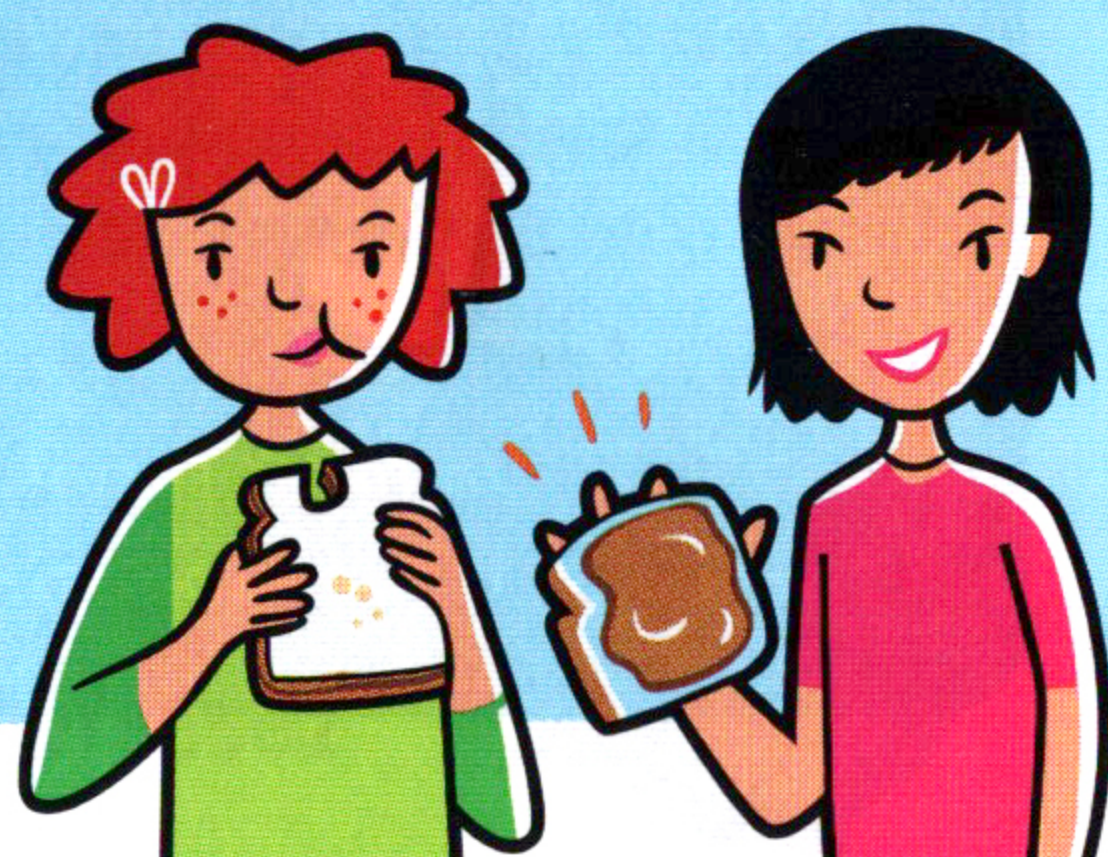
A pair of mittens becomes a sweet angel.



Holi-Doodle illustrations: Amanda Haley

Lunch Box

Dress up plain peanut butter sandwiches with these tasty additions.



PB

+



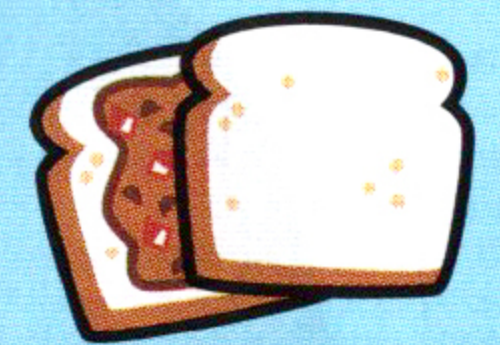
Chocolate Chips

+

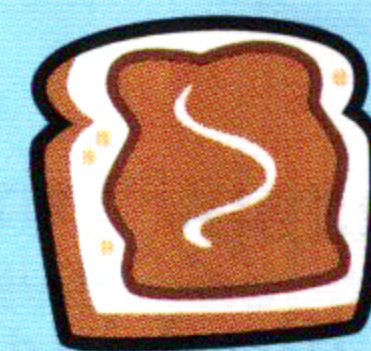


Pretzel Bits

=



Chocolate Pretzel



PB

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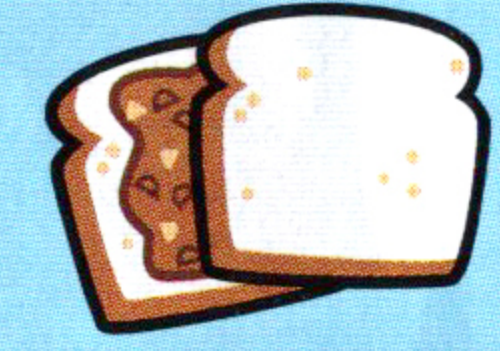
Butterscotch Chips

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Peanuts

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Peanut Butterscotch



PB

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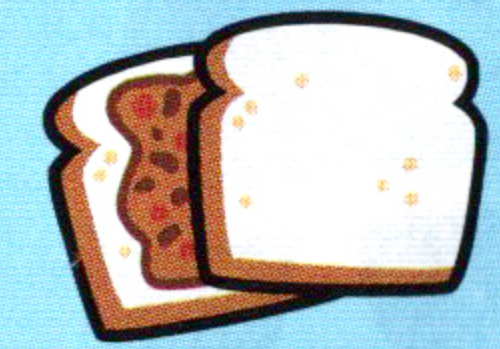
Cinnamon

+



Raisins

=



Cinnamon Raisin

Party Time!

Who: AG readers

What: Your ideas for fabulous parties you've had or would love to have! We need ideas for themes, invitations, games, favors, and other party fun—the more clever and creative, the better.

Where: Mail to American Girl magazine, 8400 Fairway Place, Middleton, WI 53562.

Why: We want to help you throw great parties! We'll show you how in an upcoming issue.

When:

Send your ideas
by December
15, 2004.

Super Sing-Along

Freezing cold weather didn't stop twins Shakima and Shakira K. from fa-la-laying their way into the record books. The 13-year-old New York girls were among 519 Christmas carolers to sing in the world's largest carol group.

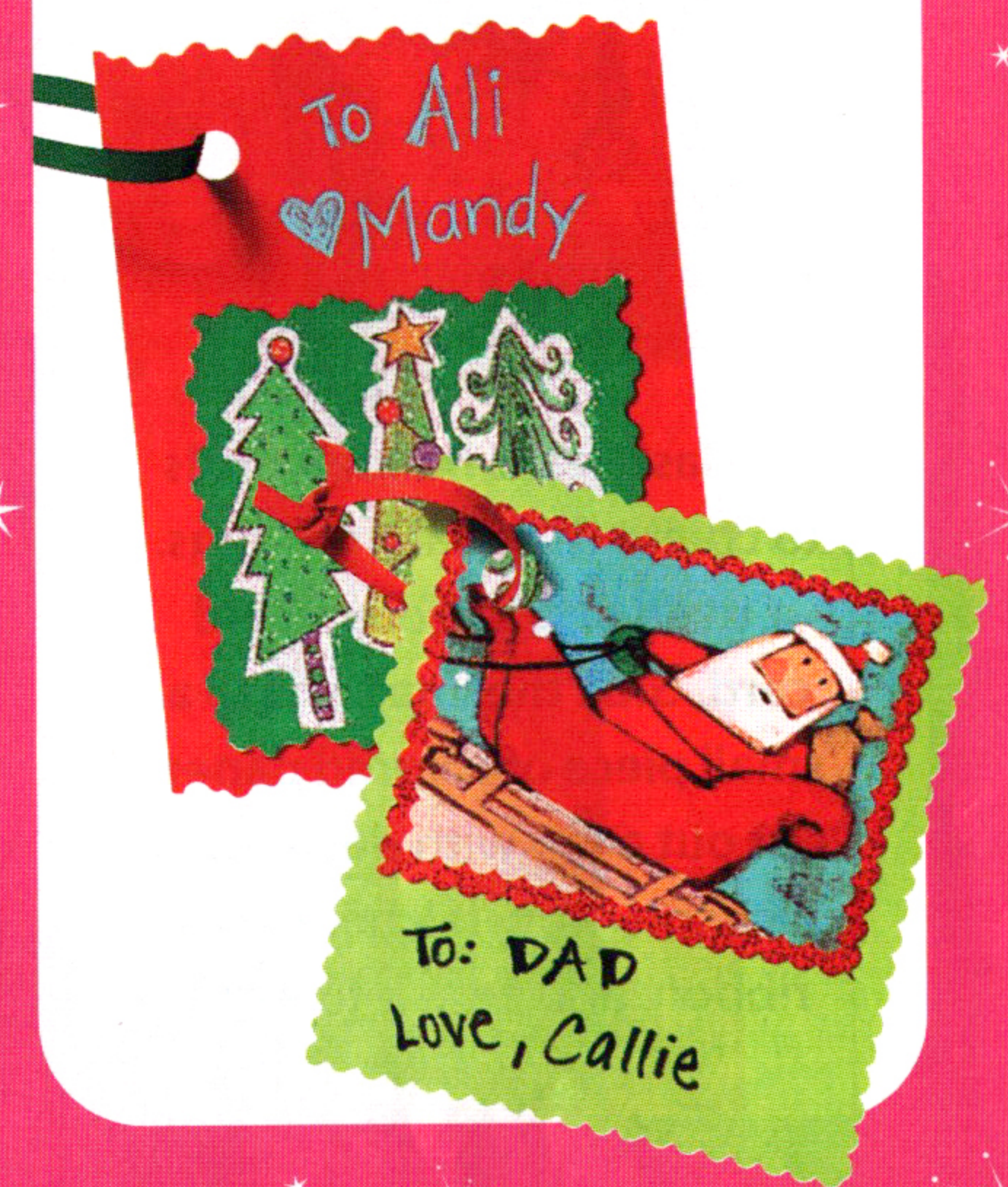
The singers gathered in New York City to belt out tunes such as "Jingle Bells" and "Silent Night." Guinness World Records officials made sure that the participants knew the lyrics and that they were actually singing. The singing had to last at least 15 minutes for the record. "It was exciting and loud," Shakira recalls.

After 16 minutes and 17 seconds, the carolers broke the record. Says Shakima, "We were in the Christmas spirit and having fun!"



Cut out card. Flip over for directions.

Gift Tags



AG Poll

In our July/August issue, we asked what kind of music you liked best. Here are the totals of your notes votes:

Classical: 55

Pop: 264

Rock: 174

Jazz: 35

Hip-Hop: 118

R&B: 32

Country: 183

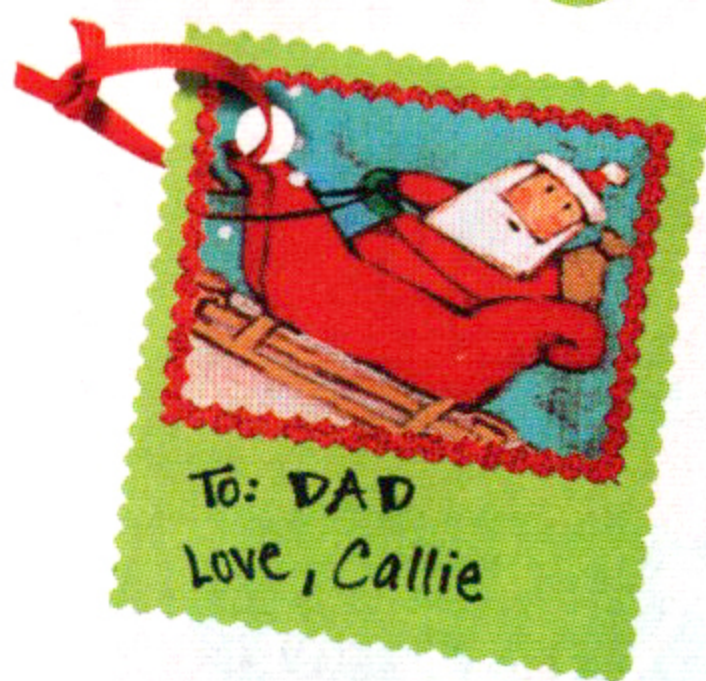
Next question:

Ahh, vacation. What's your dream destination? Circle your choice.

- ☒ A sunny, sandy beach
- ☐ A sparkly, snowy mountain
- ☐ A spirited, shiny city

Cut out your answer and mail it to us with your first and last name, address, and birth date.

Gift Tags



Use last year's holiday cards to create this year's gift tags.

Cut an image from an old card. Glue the image onto a small piece of colored paper. Cut out a tag with decorative scissors. Punch a hole for a ribbon, and attach to a gift.



Photos: Jamie Young

Help Wanted!

After a day of skating, Margie P. of Minnesota had her photo taken with Michelle Kwan! How about you—what's your fame connection? Have you had your picture taken with a celebrity? Do you share a name with a star or TV character? Do you look like someone famous? Write to us and tell us about it, or mail us your photo! Deadline is December 15, 2004. We can't return photos, so copies are O.K. Send your letter to *American Girl* magazine, 8400 Fairway Place, Middleton, WI 53562.



The Ends of the Earth

Lysee M. has stood on top of the world—and on the bottom!

The 14-year-old girl went with her dad to visit the South Pole *and* the North Pole in the span of about three months.

From her home in Texas, Lysee traveled to Chile on the way to Antarctica and the South Pole.

She spent several days at a base camp in Antarctica before setting out for the pole itself.

When Lysee finally stepped off the plane at the pole, she was stunned.

The South Pole is “very, very pretty,” she says. Even though it is also very, very cold, “It looks like there’s glitter all over the place.”

It took 32 hours to fly to the South Pole and back from the base camp. Lysee’s group spent only a few hours at the remote, frozen pole itself, but she was away from home for about two weeks.

On her trip, Lysee met scientists and other visitors from all over the world. She made a snowman, and she played a lot of

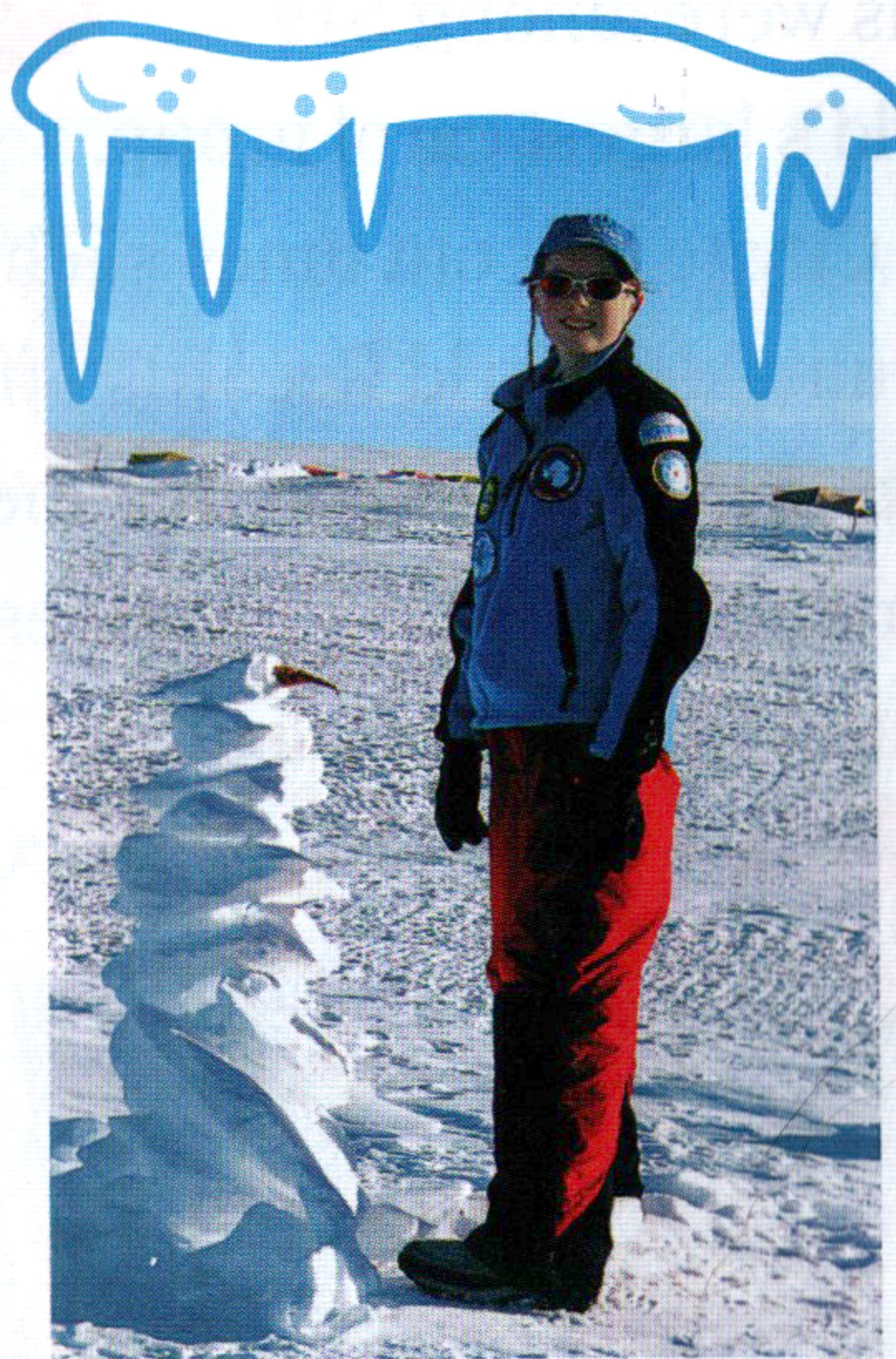
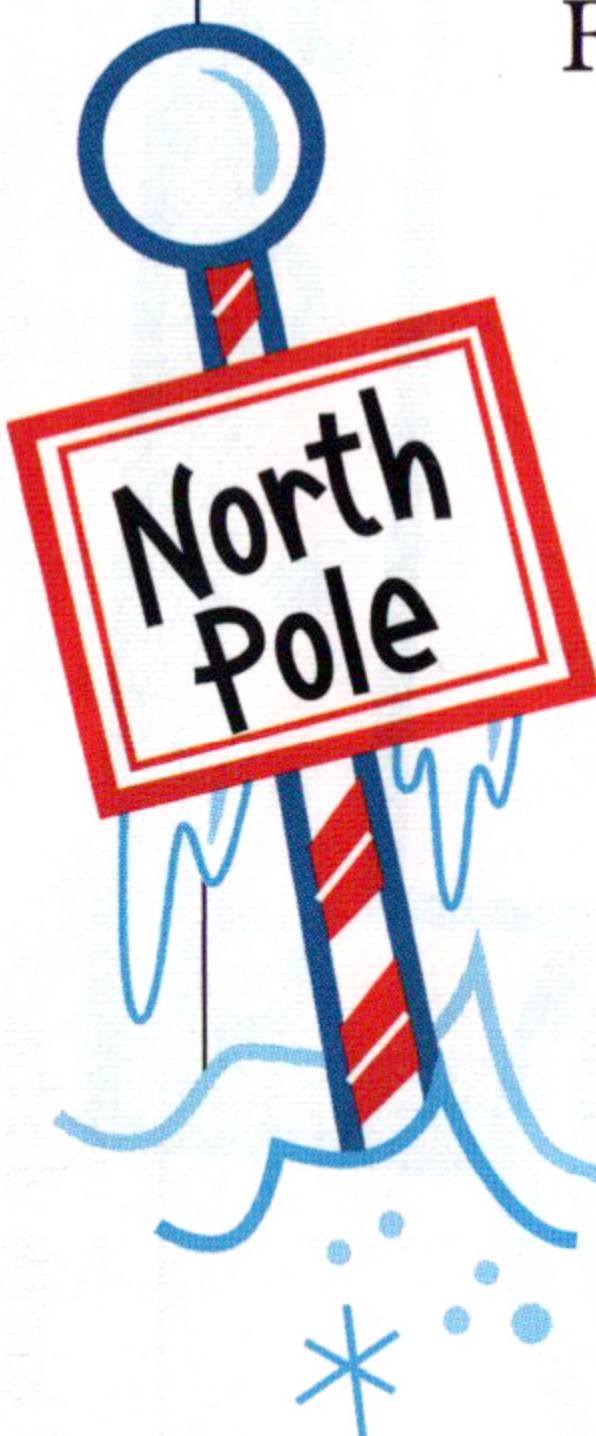
Scrabble. She even got to take the controls of an airplane during a flight!

Lysee and her dad loved the South Pole, but they wanted another adventure. So a few months later, they made a trip to the North Pole. That made Lysee the youngest girl ever to reach both poles.

The trips were “really like a life adventure for me,” she says.



Lysee got to see the post that marks the South Pole. The trip earned her this patch.



The snow in Antarctica is too dry to roll snowballs, so Lysee carved her snowman.

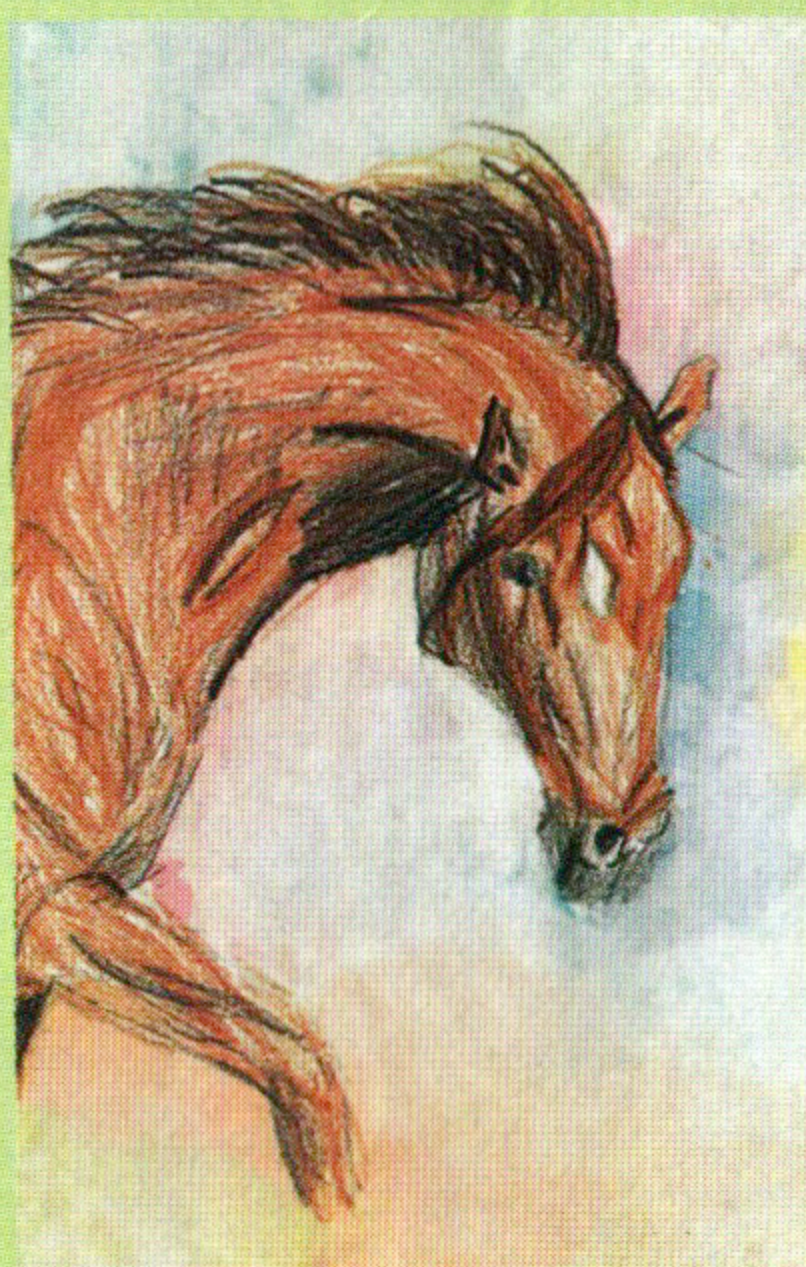


AG Art Gallery

Enjoy this art sent in by AG readers like you.

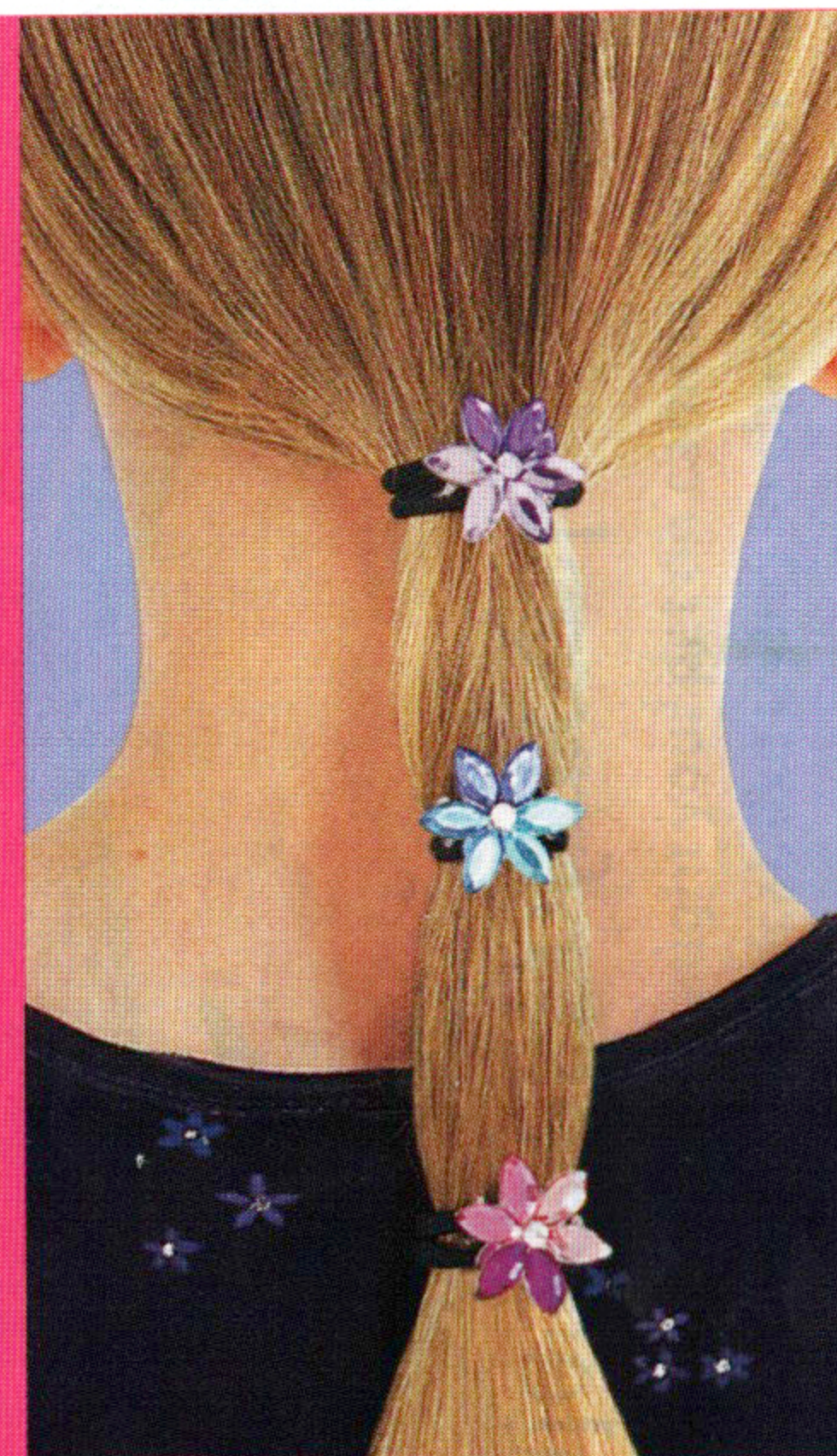


Ellie G.
Age 11, Kentucky



Robin V.
Age 13, Washington

We're looking for **artwork** for our gallery. Send **color** copies of your original artwork to the address on page 2. **Sorry**, we can't return entries.



Holiday Hair

Top a festive outfit with this cute style.

Decorate your ponytail with bejeweled ponytail ties or barrettes. Make a low ponytail at the nape of your neck and add spangles down the length of your hair for a simple, pretty tail.

Photo and styling: Jim Jordan

Shining Star



Last Christmas, Vanessa O. was excited about the season of giving.

An annual holiday project at her California school makes sure that kids in a Mexican orphanage always have shoes on their feet.

Vanessa, age 12, and her classmates raised more than \$1,300 for shoes by donating part of their lunch money some days and by asking their parents to help.

"We wanted them to have a good Christmas," Vanessa says of the kids.

Each student got to pick out a new pair of shoes to send to a child at the orphanage. Vanessa was choosing for a six-year-old girl, and she picked a cute pair she knew she would have liked when she was that age. The class made cards and wrapping paper and sent the presents.

The children sent pictures back to show how happy they were to receive the shoes. The shoes were the only new pairs they got all year.

The students were happy, too. "If you care about other people, good things will come to you," Vanessa says.

You can shine, too. Many people give clothing and food to needy families for the holidays. But when your family donates, don't forget the other things people need—such as shoes!

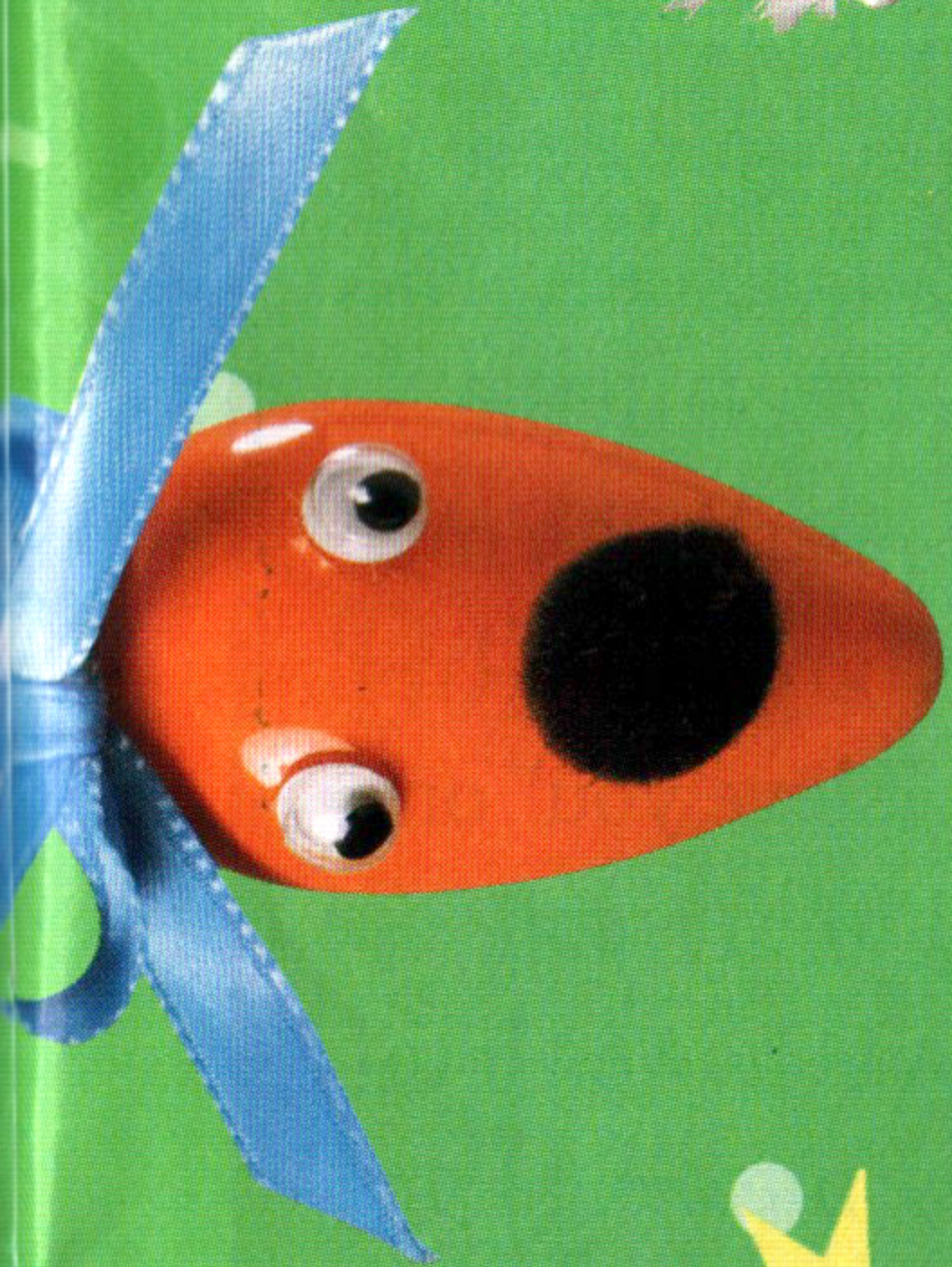
Deck the Tree

You sent in enough holiday ornaments to decorate a whole forest of trees!



Megan C.
Age 10, Michigan

Lauren Y.
Age 10, Ohio



Dina S.
Age 12, California



Chelsey J.
Age 11, Mississippi



Nicole S.
Age 11, Washington



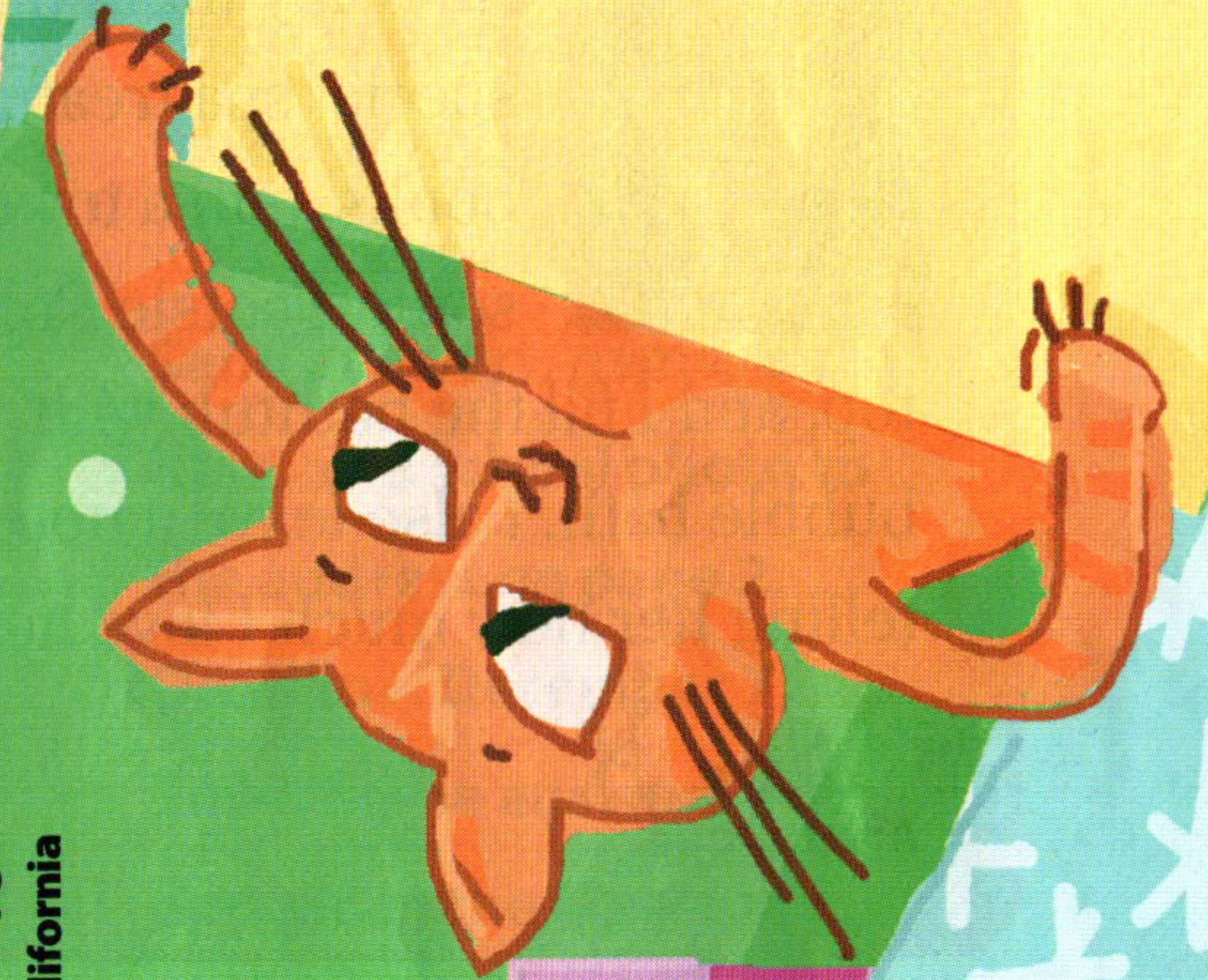
Valerie W.
Age 12, California



Alyssa S.
Age 11, Pennsylvania

New contest: Funny pet photos

Have you ever caught your pet on camera doing something hysterical, like trying to chase its own shadow? Do you have a photo of your pet making a funny face? If so, send it in! Deadline: December 10, 2004. Winners will appear in the May/June 2005 issue. Sorry, but we can't return photos.



"I Love You!"

How do you let the special people in your life know that you love them? AG readers share their best ideas.



After my mom has had a long day, I set up a special spa treatment for her. I set out candles, books, and a towel with some Tootsie Rolls on

top, and I fill the bathtub with bubble bath. I also leave a note telling her how much I love her.

Kathryn H.
Age 10, Iowa



One time when I was at the park with my grandma, I

spelled out "I love you" on the sidewalk with wood chips. When I showed it to her, she gave me a big hug.

Kaitlyn S.
Age 11, Oregon



I show my parents that I love them by doing extra

chores around the house. Sometimes I dust the house, make the beds, or take the dog for a walk. It gives my parents extra time to do the things they enjoy.

Alex R.
Age 9, Tennessee



My good friend was diagnosed with a disease last

year. Her mom told me about a walk to raise money for the disease. To show my friend that I cared, I collected money and participated in the walk with my family.

Hailee G.
Age 10, Minnesota





My dad has a cell phone that can take pictures. Once,

I took a picture of a sign I made that said "I love you." Now, every time he uses his cell phone, he remembers how much I care.

Elizabeth S.
Age 13, Tennessee



My sister and I made up a special word, *pucka*, that

means "I love you," and we say it to each other every night.

Katherine B.
Age 10, Florida

Speak from Your Heart

Next subject: Allowance.

Do you get an allowance?

How much money do you think is fair? Should girls

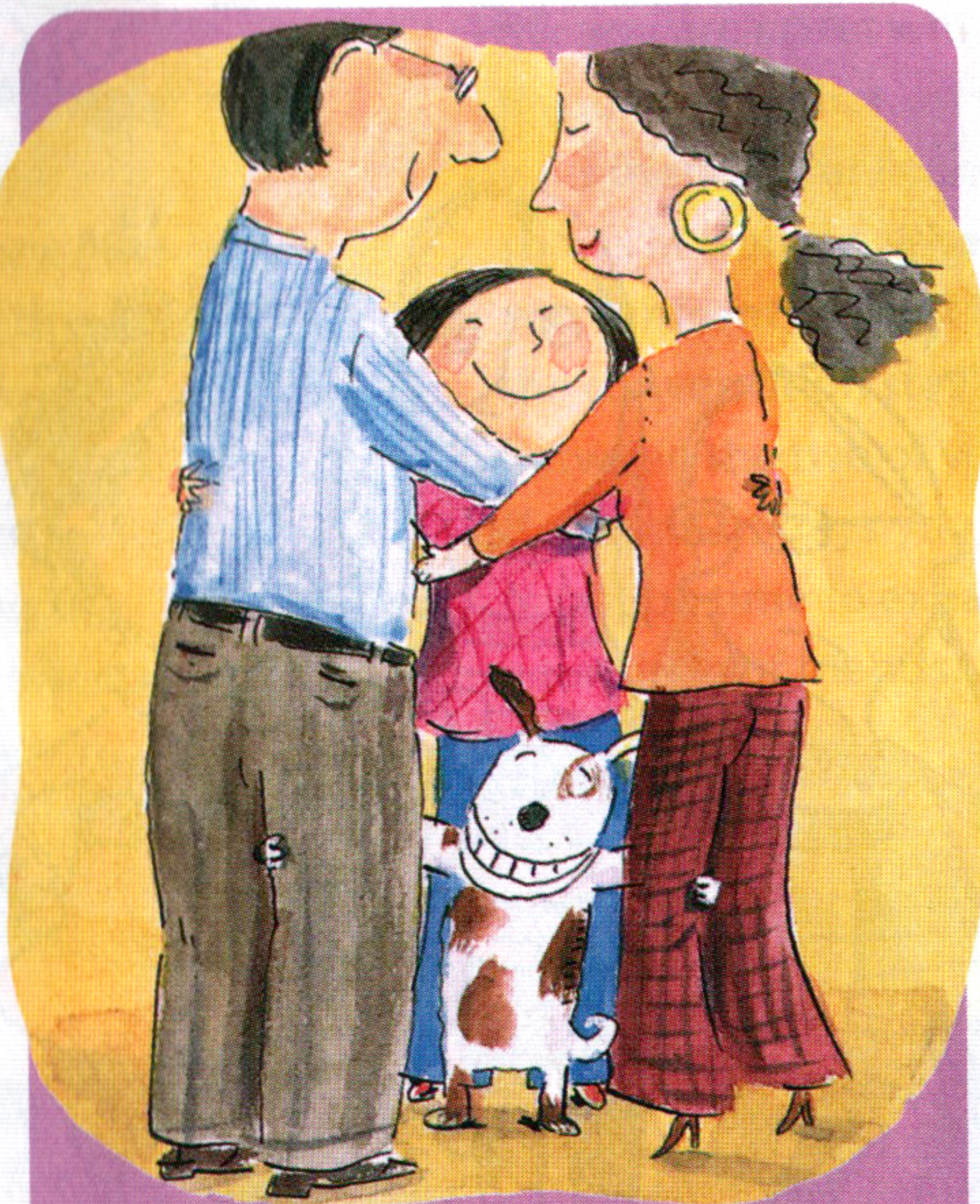
have to do chores in order to get an allowance?

Should allowances be based on good grades? What's the best way for a girl to ask for a raise in her allowance?

Send answers, name, birth date, and school photo to the address on page 2.

Deadline: December 7, 2004. Some answers will appear in the May/June 2005 issue. ★

Big Truth
The important thing is that you say it, not how you say it.



I show my brother that I love him by watching him

play computer games. I don't really like his games, but I watch because he asks me to and I love him.

Emma B.
Age 10, California



My favorite way of saying "I love you" is very simple

but very effective. I just go up to my parents, wrap them up in a bear hug, and tell them. It's so simple!

Allie P.
Age 12, California



Three's Company— or a Crowd?

Read about what makes friendship trios so great—and sometimes so tough! Take this quiz and see how *your* trio stacks up.

by Patti Kelley Criswell

1. If you are going somewhere fun and your parents say you can take only one friend, does the thought of having to choose one friend over another make you nervous?

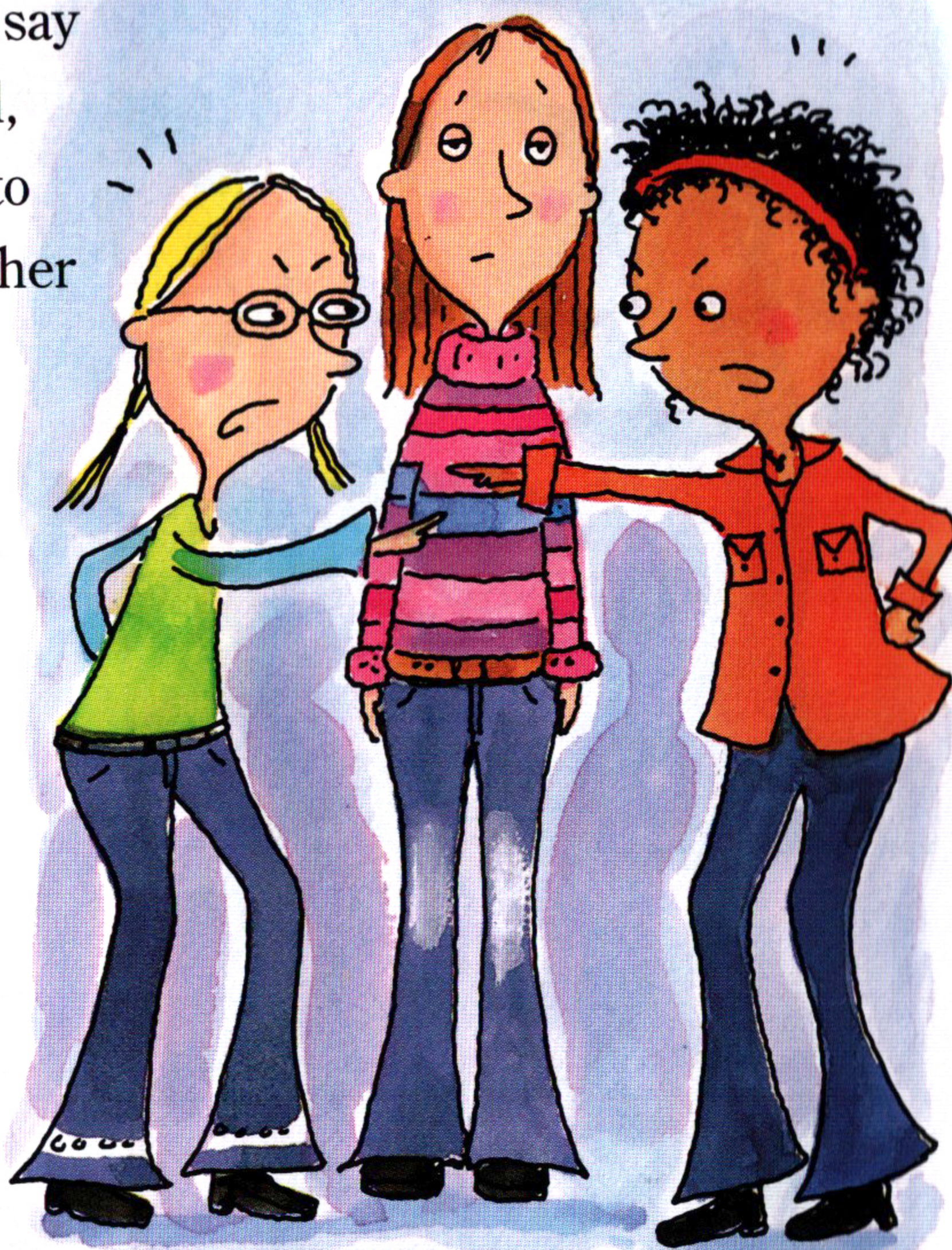
☐ That's me.

☒ That's not me.

2. Do you feel hurt and left out when your two friends get together and you're not invited?

☒ That's me.

☐ That's not me.



4. If you are mad at one friend, do you avoid telling her because you're afraid she'll tell the other friend?

☐ That's me.

☒ That's not me.

5. When you get together with one friend, do you gossip about the other?

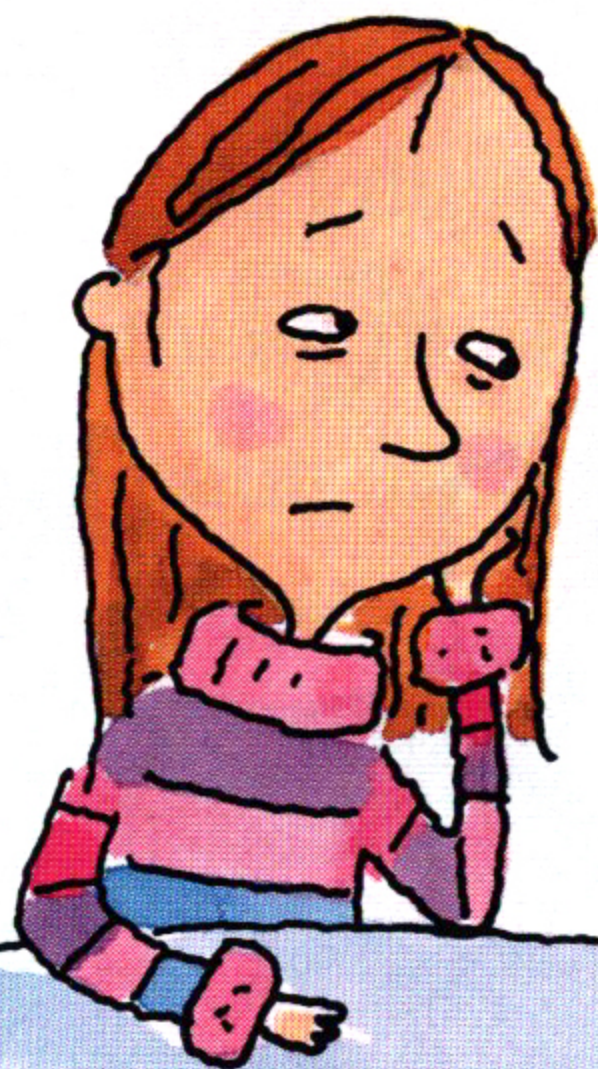
☒ That's me.

☐ That's not me.

3. Are you ever stuck in the middle of both friends when they fight?

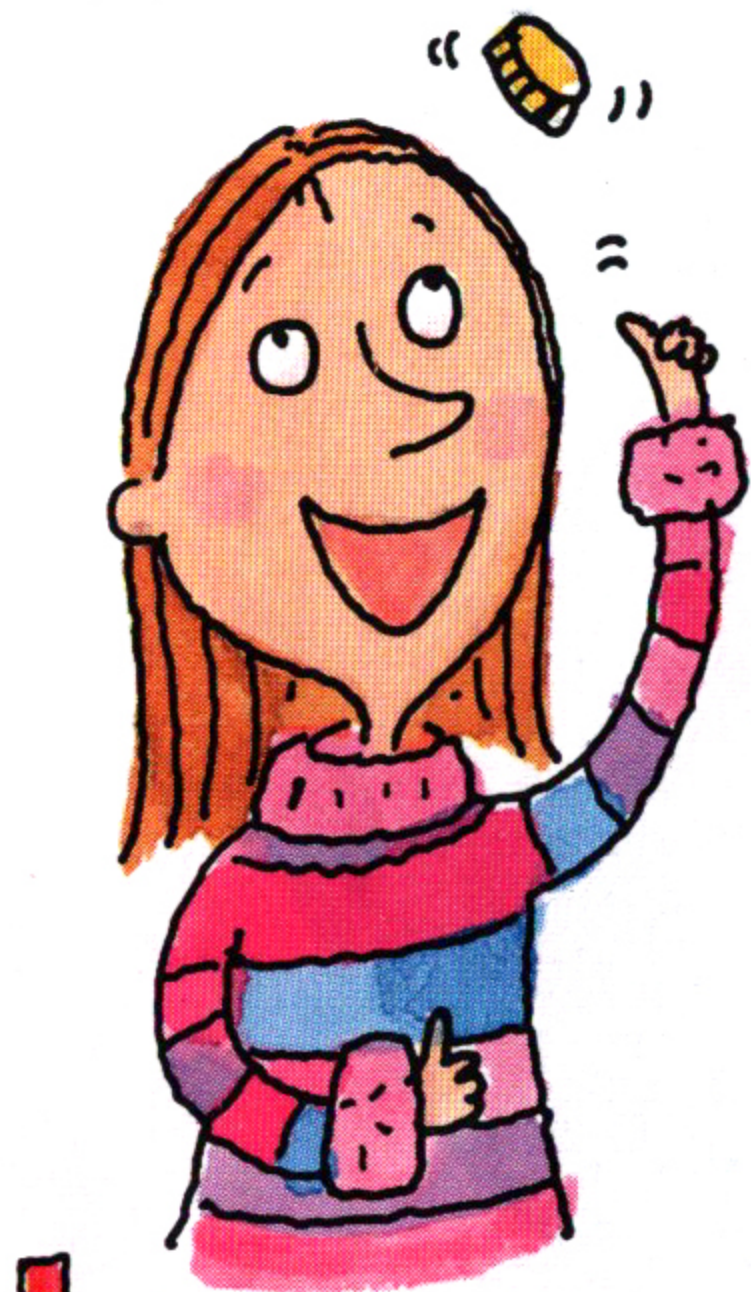
☐ That's me.

☒ That's not me.



Answers

If you answered "That's me," here is some advice on how to handle those situations.



1. Having to choose one friend over another isn't easy. Be totally honest with your friends and be fair. Pick a number or flip a coin to see who gets to go along. Let the friend who isn't chosen know how much you wish you could invite her. Be sensitive to her feelings and try not to brag or talk about the event when you get back.

2. Remember that individual friendships within a trio are O.K., too. But feeling left out can hurt. If your friends are doing things without you and it upsets you, let them know how you feel. Get together with different friends, or do a fun solo activity such as reading or making crafts.



3. No one likes being caught in the middle. Let each girl know that you are good friends with her *and* with the other girl. Say something like, "You need to talk to her about that."

That way you are being supportive of each friend without having to choose a side.



4. A good friend is someone you can trust, even if that means telling her you are upset with her. If you can't be honest with your friend, your friendship is in trouble. When you confront her, ask that the conversation stay between the two of you. If she still betrays you, it might be time to expand your circle of friends.

5. If there is one thing that can make a good friendship go bad, it's gossip. Although it might make you feel closer to one friend to talk about the other, don't do it. If you really need to talk to someone about a friendship problem, go to your mom or sister—*not* to your mutual friend.



Tips for Terrific Trios

With some effort and understanding, you can have a fabulous friendship made for three!

Be supportive of friendships outside the trio.



Choose activities that three can do together, such as board games or scrapbooking.

Support each other — don't compete.

Avoid inside jokes if they don't involve all three of you. ★

Let us know if you like Friendship Matters and what topics you'd like to see covered. Write to us at the address on page 2.

Write to Us!

I Can't Believe It



I got my cat back after seven years!



Happened to Me!

Meet girls who have had their wildest dreams come true.



Kelly R. didn't plan to become an inventor. In fact, she wouldn't have invented anything at all if she and her six siblings hadn't been a bother years ago. "It was a rainy day, and we were getting on my dad's nerves," recalls Kelly, 12. "So he told us to each draw an invention. He promised to build a prototype, or model, of whoever's invention was the best."

The Massachusetts girl, who was six years old at the time, designed the T-Pak—a small bag that straps around your thigh and holds small items such as keys.

Kelly's T-Pak won the invention competition, and Kelly's dad had a prototype made. Kelly eagerly took the first 100 T-Paks to a middle-school fair. She sold them all! "When I came home, my parents were super surprised," she remembers.

The young inventor used the profits to make another 500 T-Paks. This time her

dad took them to a trade show, where they all sold within ten minutes!

It was when a customer ordered 100,000 T-Paks that Kelly's dad quit his job and started working for Kelly. Many people laugh when they hear that. "Everyone thinks it's funny because I get to tell him what to do. I'm just kidding—we make decisions together."

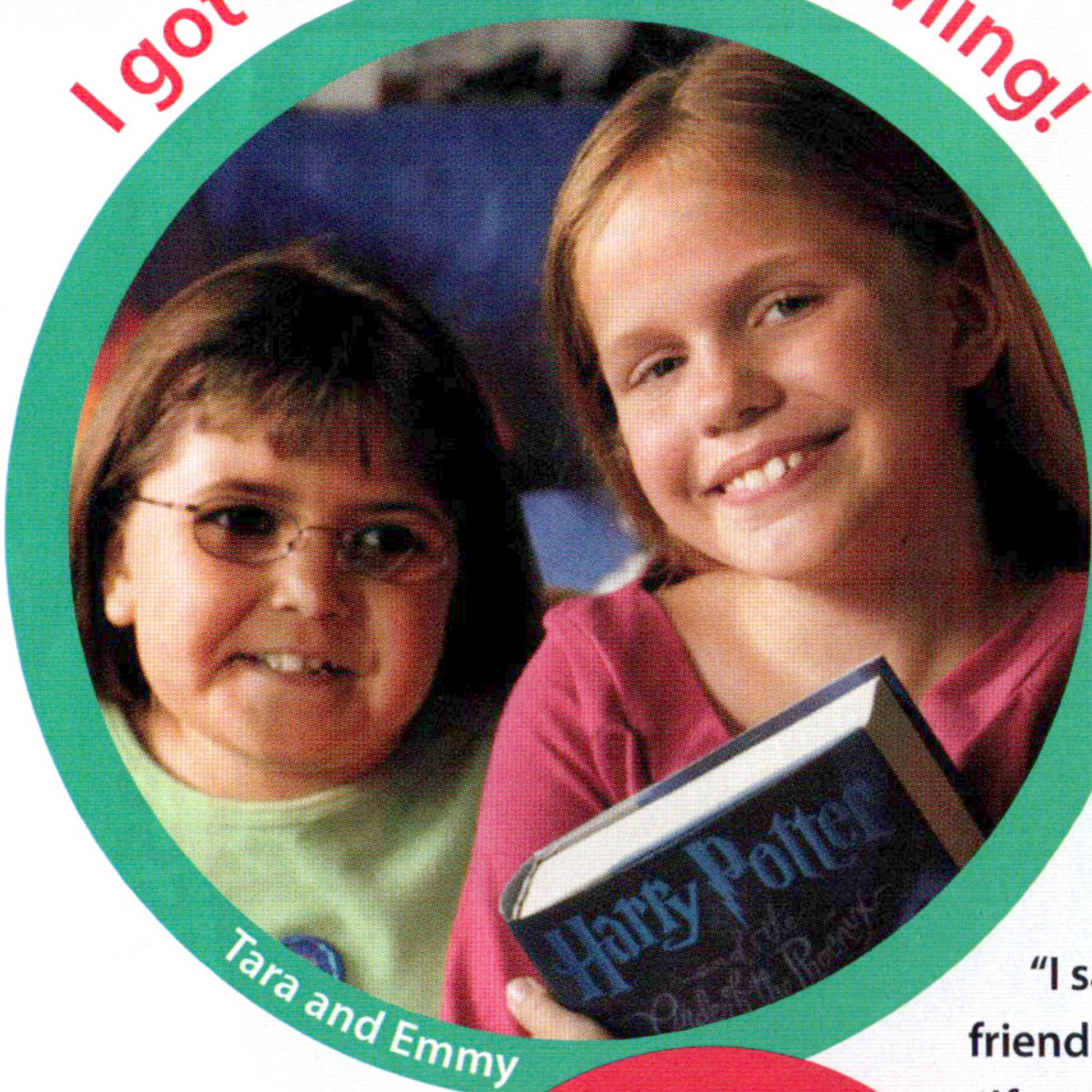
Kelly has since sold the rights to the T-Pak to an investor. In the meantime, Kelly has her own nonprofit organization to help kids become entrepreneurs. She's also working on "Kelly's Gear"—her own line of products and clothing.

Sometimes Kelly can't believe the success she's had. "It just started off as a little drawing that might not have gone anywhere. But it sure has gone places now!"

I started my own business!



I got to meet J. K. Rowling!



Tara and Emmy

Many Harry Potter fans dream of meeting author J. K. Rowling. For Emmy G., age 10, that fantasy came true!

The Indiana girl entered an essay contest in which she had to choose a magic potion from the Harry Potter books and describe what she would do with it. Emmy chose Polyjuice Potion, which lets you trade places with someone else.

"I said I'd want to trade places with my friend Tara," Emmy explains. "Tara is blind. If we switched places, she would be able to see, and I'd understand what it's like to be blind."

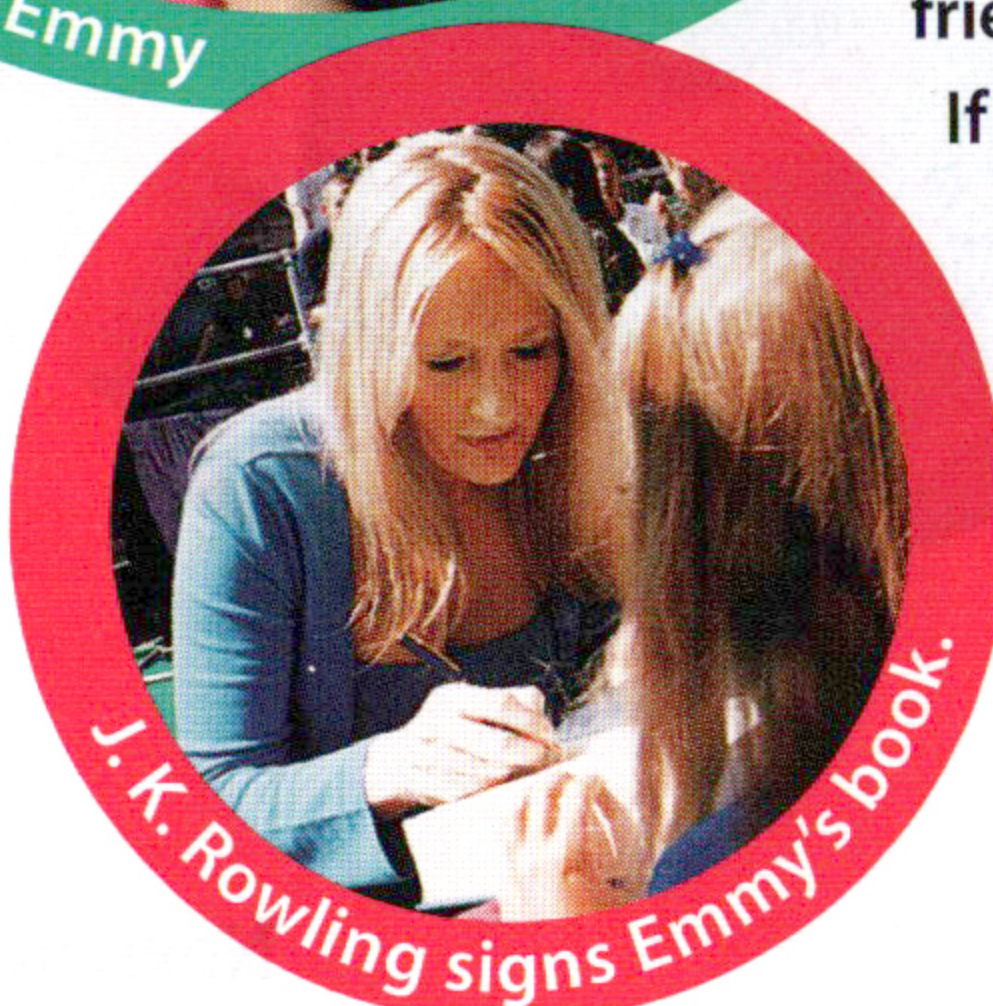
Out of 12,000 entries, Emmy was one of ten lucky winners. When Emmy told Tara she'd won, Tara

could not believe it. "Tara was so happy that she helped me win!" says Emmy.

Emmy and her mom were whisked away to London for just two days. Not only did the winners and their parents get to go sightseeing—they got to see J. K. Rowling be interviewed and meet her face-to-face!

"J. K. Rowling got out of a small, regular-looking car. I was really surprised, because I thought she'd be in a limo," recalls Emmy. Then the author headed toward the winners to sign books before going in for the interview. Emmy was first in line.

"I shook her hand and told her I enjoyed her books. She thanked me," says Emmy, who still has the pen J. K. Rowling used to sign her book. "It felt like time was frozen and it was just us there. I will treasure that moment forever!"



J. K. Rowling signs Emmy's book.

I got to be an actress!



AnnaSophia and Bethany on the set



Watch
*Samantha: An
American Girl
Holiday* on
The WB Tuesday,
November 23!

Bethany F. traded in her jeans and sneakers for an apron and boots! When Bethany's contest entry was chosen from more than 85,000 others, the nine-year-old got to spend two days on the set of the movie *Samantha: An American Girl Holiday*. "I was excited!" Bethany says.

The movie, set in New York City in 1904, is the story of Samantha Parkington, a girl who wants to rescue her best friend, Nellie O'Malley, from an orphanage. Everything in the movie, from the sets to the costumes to the props, looks just like it would have looked 100 years ago.

During the first day on the movie set, Bethany got to help choose the dress she would wear in an orphanage scene. "It looked like a real orphan's clothes," the Georgia girl explains. She also got to pick out boots and stockings to wear.

After getting in costume, Bethany had her hair done. "They put my hair down, and then they put conditioner and dirt in it," she explains. The dirt was to make her look more like an orphan would have looked in those days. Bethany also had her makeup done.

What was the best part of the whole experience? Making new friends, including AnnaSophia Robb, the actress who plays Samantha. "She was real sweet," Bethany says.

Adrienne E.'s family feared the worst when their cat, Cheyenne, slipped out the door of their Florida home. "We searched for Cheyenne for a month. Since we live near a canal, we assumed an alligator got her."

Amazingly, seven years later, Adrienne's mom got a phone call from an animal shelter in California. Somehow, Cheyenne had made her way to San Francisco and was dropped off at the shelter.

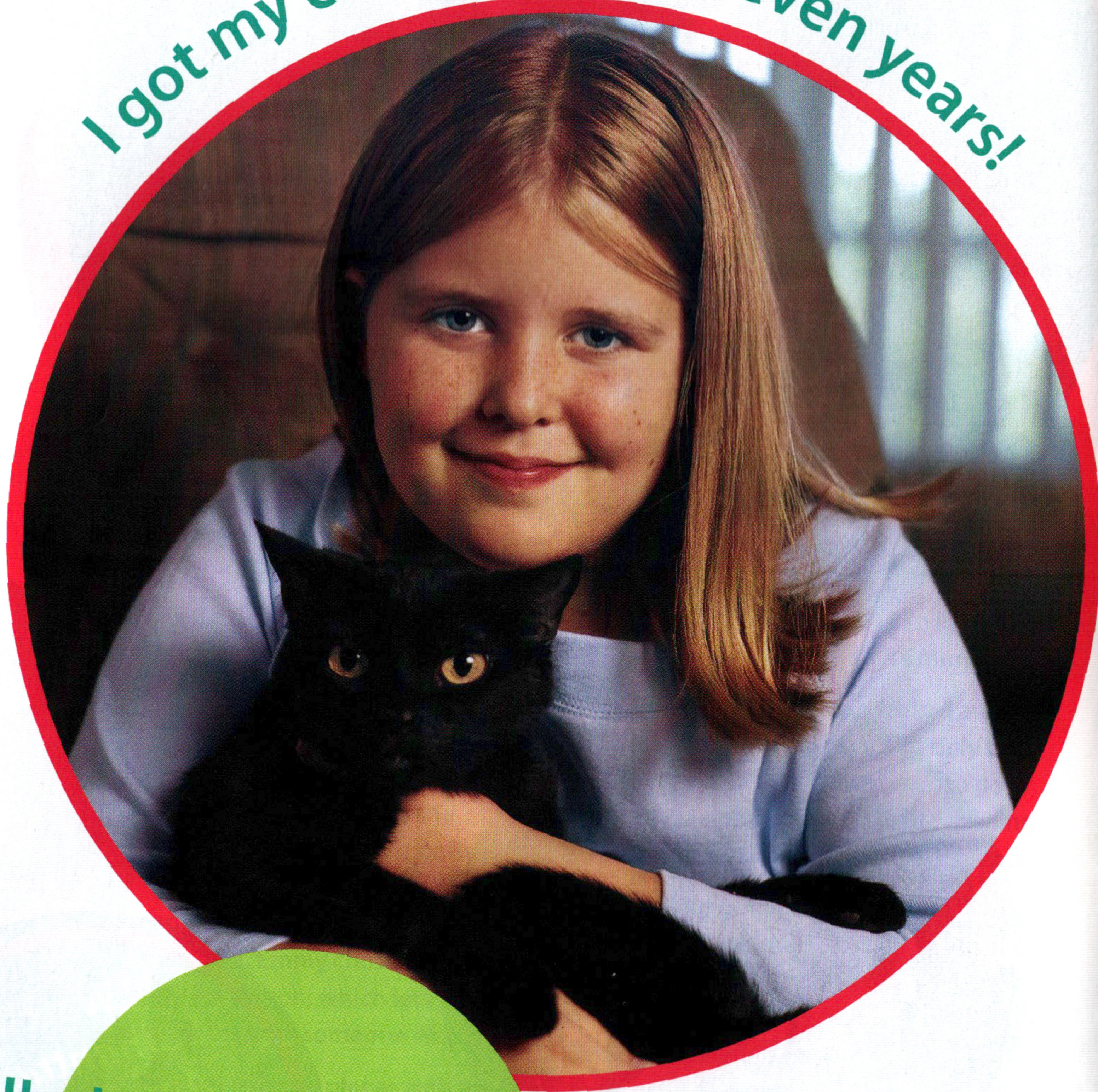
When Adrienne's family adopted Cheyenne years before, the shelter had implanted a computer chip under the cat's skin. The chip had Adrienne's family's contact information. When Cheyenne arrived at the California shelter, workers scanned the chip and were able to call the family.

"The shelter called on April Fools' Day and told us they found our cat. My mom asked, 'What cat?'" laughs Adrienne. "My mom thought it was a joke, since Cheyenne had been gone so long."

Cheyenne's dramatic lost-and-found story made national news. Animal Planet filmed Adrienne's reunion with her long-lost cat. "At first Cheyenne was scared because she didn't know us," says Adrienne, who was three years old when the cat ran away. "Then I started to pet her and she began to purr." Adrienne still can't believe Cheyenne is home safe and sound. "It's amazing that my cat was lost for seven years and then someone found her. It's like fate!" ★



I got my cat back after seven years!



"The shelter called on April Fools' Day.

My mom thought it was a joke."



Wrap & Roll

Turn an everyday object into
an adorable container for gifts!



It's so simple!

- 1** Start with an empty toilet paper tube.
- 2** Fill the tube with your choice of goodies.
- 3** Roll the tube in tissue paper and secure with tape.
- 4** Making sure the contents stay inside the tube, tie ends of tissue with anything from ribbons to pipe cleaners.
- 5** Let your creativity take over and decorate the tube.



Squeaky Clean

Bath beads, bath salts, mini rubber ducky



Hooray for 2005

Noisemaker, sparkly accents, balloons



Animal Lover

Magnet, stickers, key chain



Sweet Tooth

Lots of chocolate!



Bead Lover

Elastic cord and beads



Hair's to You!

Hair elastics, barrettes, butterfly clips



Pink Power

Everything pink!



Happy Hanukkah

Gelt, mini dreidel, confetti



Stuck on You

Fun bandages, gum, stickers



Holiday Cheer

Jingle bells, mints, holiday earrings



The holiday season means it's time for some

Family Fun

by Evany Thomas



What's New with You?

See how long you can hold a conversation using nothing but one-syllable words. It's hard, but it can be done!



Be Our Guest

Start a new tradition! Keep track of your family gatherings in a guest book. Put the date on the page, and ask your family members to all

sign their names and write short messages. You will enjoy adding to the book all year long and looking back at past get-togethers.

Future Fun

Have everyone write down her or his biggest resolution for the new year on a slip of paper. Put the slips in a box, seal it, and write "Do not open until December 31, 2005" across the top. Next year, see how many people kept their resolutions.



One to Grow On

Make a growth chart. Tape colored pieces of paper together to make a long strip, and tape it to a door. Measure everyone in your family. Mark each person's height with a line and her or his name. Don't forget the family pet! Pack the chart away with the holiday decorations, then compare heights next year.



Sitting, Still?

On your mark, get set, SIT!
Each person leans against
a wall and slowly slides
down into a sitting position.
The person who can "sit" the
longest wins. Warning: It's
not nearly as easy as it looks.

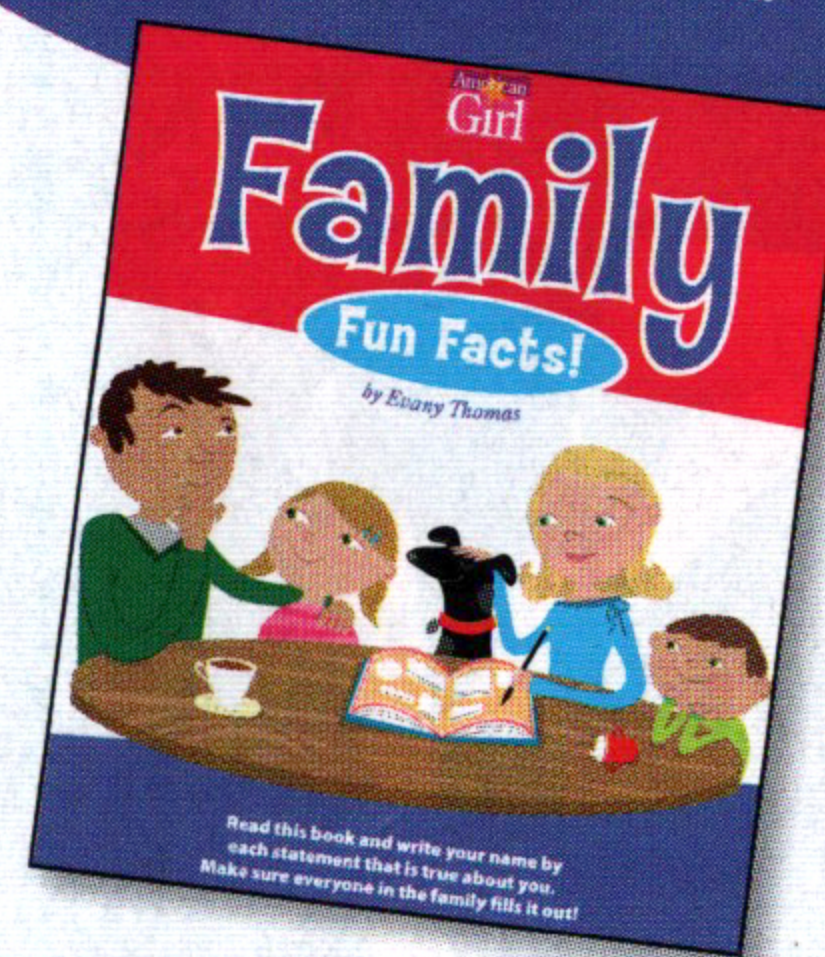


Knot Now

It's magic! Challenge a
family member to grab a
long piece of string and tie
a knot in it—without letting
go of the ends. After she
gives up, cross your arms
across your chest, then
pick up the string. Simply
uncross your arms to make
the knot, and watch your
family become fit to be tied.
(Make sure to practice your
trick before you show off!)



More Fun!
Don't forget to fill out AG's
Family Fun Facts book!





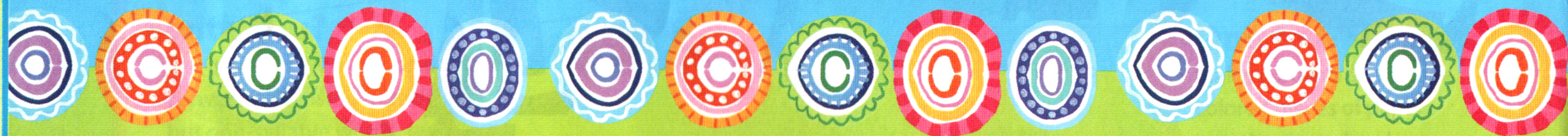
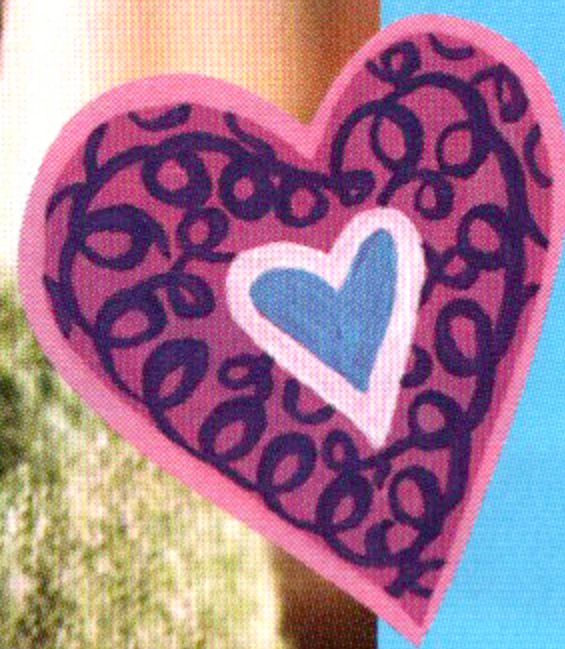
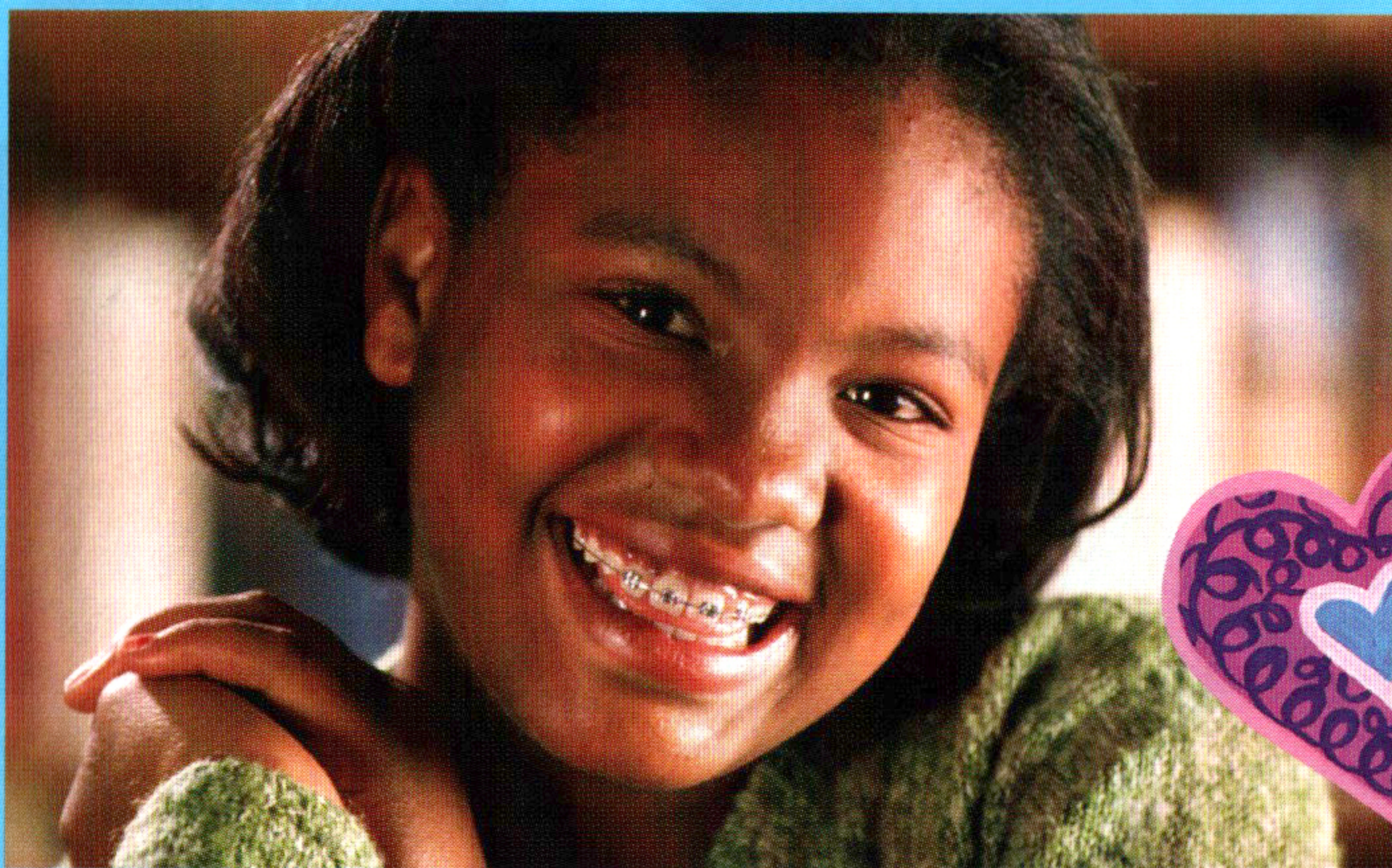
Feel Good!

by Therese Kauchak

These ten tips will help you love being YOU!

1 **Be confident.**

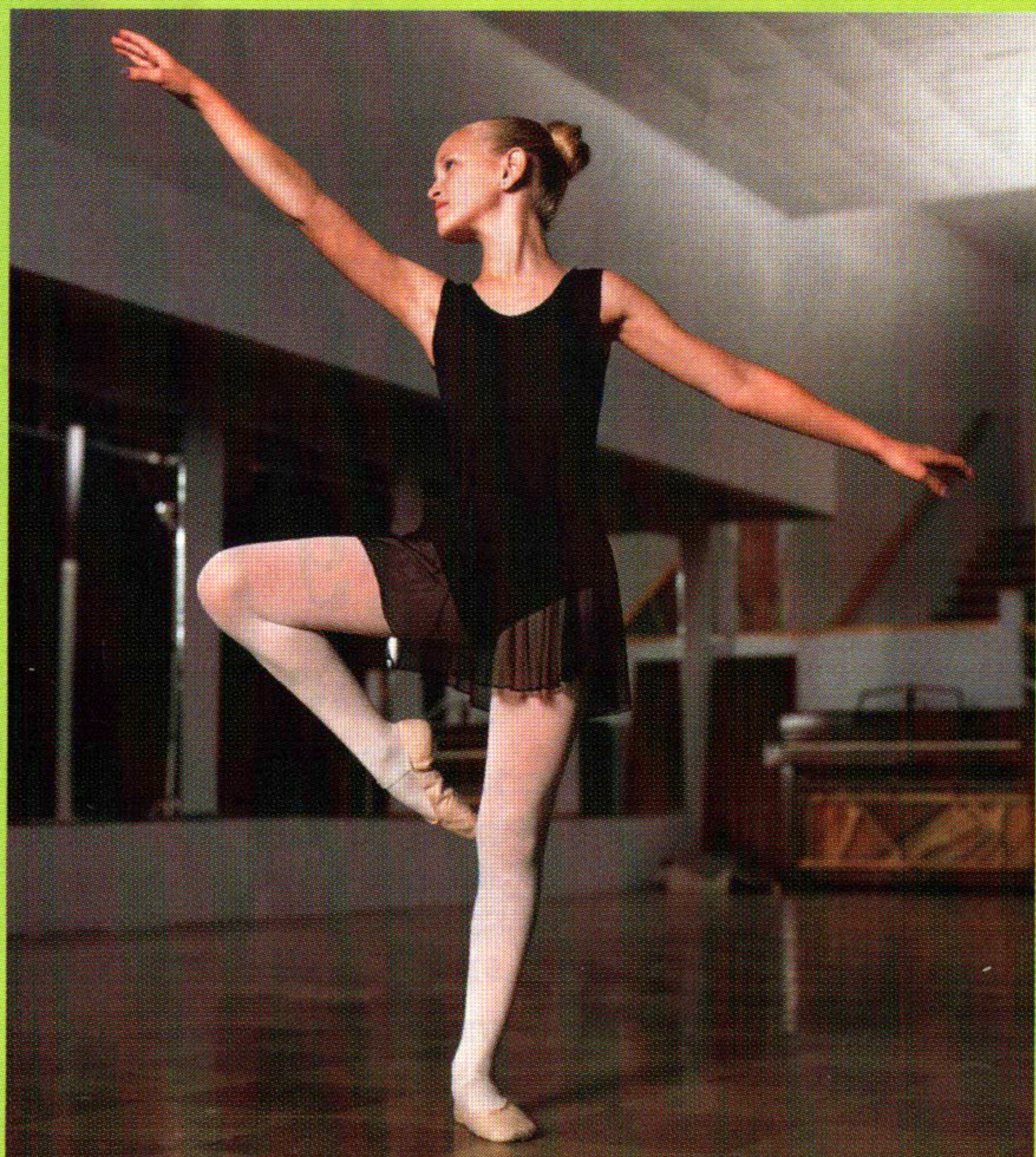
It's the most beautiful trait you can have. Figure out what you like best about yourself and let it shine.



2 **Be proud when you're good at something.**

If you do a great back walkover, more power to you! What's the difference between being proud and bragging? It's all about timing.


If you want to show your friends your skill, pick an appropriate moment to do so—not during class or when people are focused on something else. When you're hanging out sometime, first ask your friends if they want to see what you've mastered. Then give it all you've got. Make sure you compliment other people on what they do well, too.



3 List five things you're good at.

They can be anything from doing math to making up jokes.

If you feel down about yourself, check out this list and remember—you rock!

- 
1. Making up ideas
 2. Swimming
 3. Dancing
 4. Making friends
 5. Manicures/Pedicures



4 Try a new activity.

You don't have to be a superstar.
It's O.K. to be O.K.

5 Go play.

Exercise doesn't have to be hard work—it can be a social time for you and your friends. Turn off the TV, grab your best bud, and go skating. Walk to the park. Play a CD and dance. You'll definitely feel better than if you'd stayed stuck to the sofa.

6

Wear clothes that make you feel good.

You know which shirt makes you feel self-conscious and which pants make you squirm. Talk to your mom about why you don't feel comfy in those clothes, and ask if you can give them to charity.



7

Really accept a compliment.

When a friend says, "You look great," don't brush her off with "I think these pants make me look goofy." Just say, "Thanks," and let the words sink in.

8 Challenge yourself.

Do you play an instrument? Play a song that's more difficult than usual or learn a tune by ear—no sheet music allowed. Do you like to run? Run a little farther than you usually go. Raise the bar for yourself—then leap it!

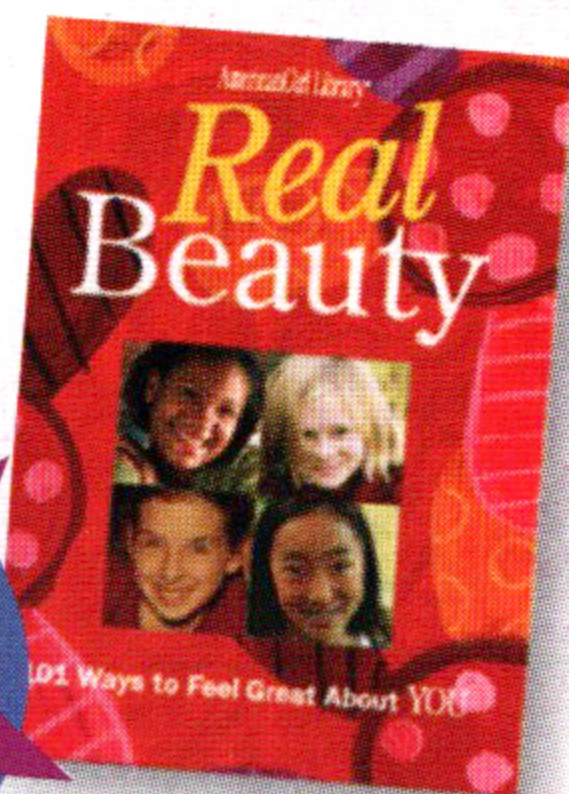
9 Laugh till your stomach hurts

(even if it makes you snort!).

10 Identify your "cheer squad."

Your personal cheer squad is made up of people who support, encourage, and want what's best for you. Write down the names of three of your "cheerleaders," and describe how each has helped you. Then write each one a note, send her an e-mail, or give her a call to thank her for her encouragement. Go, team! ★

For more tips, check out *Real Beauty: 101 Ways to Feel Great About YOU*, available in bookstores. To find out how you can win a free copy, turn to page 2.



1. Haileg
2. Maddie
- 3.

Cute 'n' Clean

Make these funky soap bottles to give as gifts!

YOU WILL NEED

- * Clear plastic bottle of hand soap with a pump
- * Scissors
- * Small bowl
- * Sheet of acetate (available at copy shops or craft stores)
- * Hole punch
- * Coated brads without any exposed metal (available at scrapbook and craft stores)
- * Small paintbrush
- * Funnel



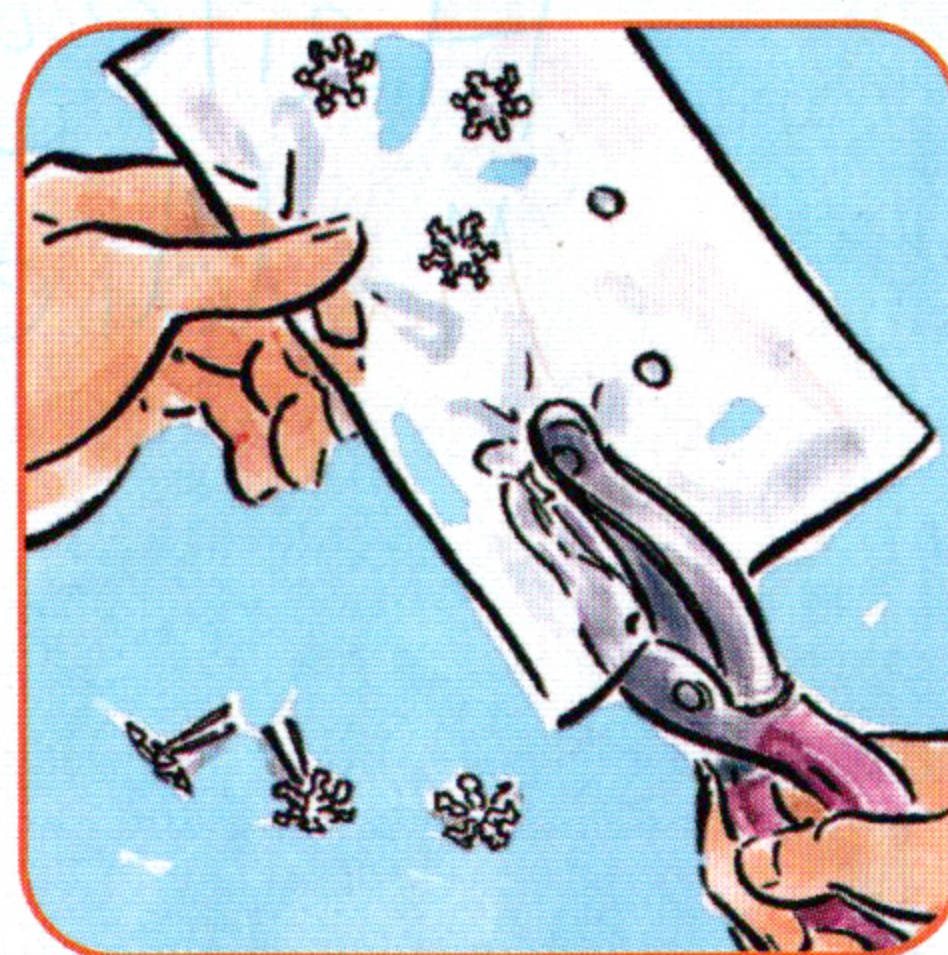
1 Carefully peel the label from the soap bottle. (Use nail polish remover to get rid of stubborn glue.)



2 Unscrew the pump and pour the soap into a bowl.



3 Cut a piece of acetate to fit inside the soap bottle. The piece does not need to be sized exactly.



4 Use a hole punch to punch holes where you want the brads to go. Put brads in holes.



5 Roll up acetate and place in the bottle. The acetate should unroll by itself. If it does not, use the end of a paintbrush to position it correctly.



6 Using a funnel, pour the soap back into the bottle. Use the end of a paintbrush to position the acetate in case it moved while pouring the soap. Place the pump back on the soap bottle.

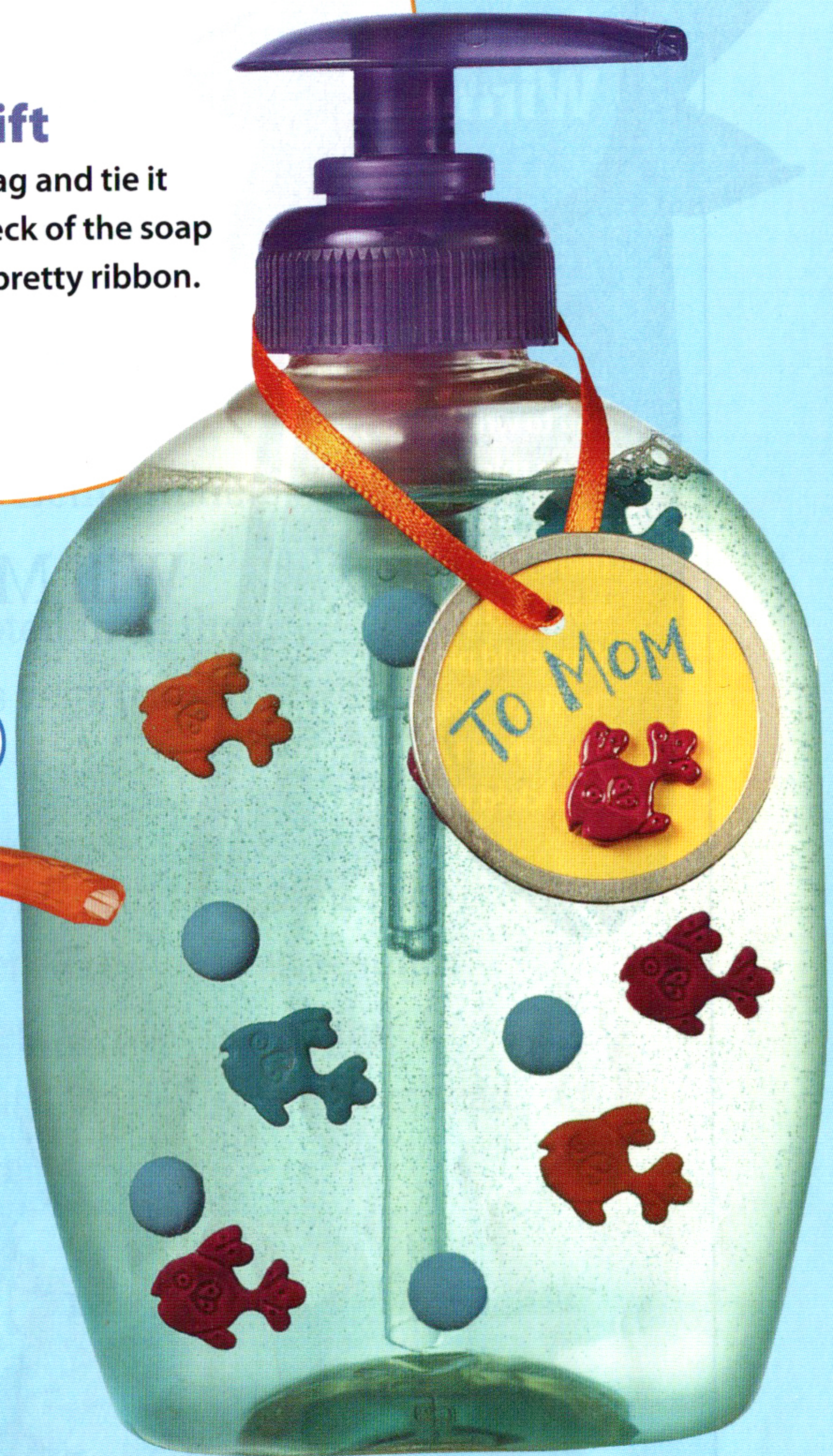


Lovely Label

Create your own soap label. Glue a foam shape to the front of the bottle. Decorate with letter beads.

Give a Gift

Make a cute tag and tie it around the neck of the soap bottle with a pretty ribbon.



Special Thanks

Make a soap bottle to give as a gift to your favorite teacher. ★



Contest
Winner

Last March, we invited you to write a story using this line: "When I peeked in the room, there it was—the best/worst gift in the world." You could pick either "best" or "worst." From the more than 1,600 entries, we picked this winner!

Angel in Training

Will Mel ruin a friendship over a part in the school play?

by Hillary C.



"Peanut butter," I said as my friends and I sat down for lunch.
"Ham," said Beth.
"Tofu," Rainbow said sadly.

Beth and I glanced at our other friend Rainbow, who scowled at the sandwich in her hand. Beth and I looked back at each other and exchanged sandwiches.

"I have carrot sticks," Rainbow begged, her eyes like a puppy dog's who had just been swatted away with a newspaper.

"Anyone want to trade for that?"

I sighed and handed her my homemade chocolate chip cookies with regret.





She squealed in delight and hugged me before she tossed the carrots my way. I made a face and slipped the bag into my backpack.

"Grandma always gives me \$50 for Christmas," Rainbow said, her mouth full of cookie. "I'm going to save it all and use it to buy truckloads of candy."

I laughed. Rainbow's mother was a true health-food nut and wouldn't even let Rainbow have a lick of frosting from a birthday cake.

"I can't believe Christmas is only a couple of weeks away!" Beth grinned.

We all nodded in agreement.

"And the Christmas play—don't forget!" I added, then quoted from the show the seventh graders put on every year: "As all of you can see, it's very true; the meaning of Christmas is not what we have but what we—"

"Do!" my friends shouted in unison, laughing.

Every year since we were in first grade, we'd watched the seventh graders do the same show, and we had it memorized by the time we were ten. This year, as seventh graders ourselves, we'd be performing it. We all longed to get the part of the angel. The girl who got that spot wore the most gorgeous gown that sparkled in the overhead stage light. And in my heart I just knew that girl would be me.



The teacher who would direct the play this year was Ms. Florence, a gray-haired woman who could barely see. She began passing out the script to the class later that day and said, "I will go through the list of characters in the play, and you can decide which person you'd like to be. The main character, as you know, is the angel who narrates the play and has an important role in this production. Of course, there are no small parts, just small ..."

Nobody paid much attention, and I noticed some of the kids counting freckles on their arms or examining their shoes as if footwear held the cure for cancer. At last,



Ms. Florence read each character's name and waited for someone to raise her or his hand. When she finally got through the list and came to the part of the angel, both Beth and I raised our hands. Ms. Florence squinted at us and then decided.

"Beth, you'll make a good angel. The rest of you who didn't volunteer will work on scenery and be in the choir. Now, I need the actors to come with me, and the rest of you will go with the art teacher."

I stared dumbfounded at Ms. Florence as she turned and led half the class out. Beth looked over her shoulder at me with a wary expression on her face before heading out into the hallway.

"Don't worry about it, Mel," Rainbow comforted me later as I splashed red paint onto a piece of cardboard angrily. "It's not Beth's fault that Ms. Florence chose her."

"She shouldn't have volunteered in the first place!" I burst out, splattering paint onto my face. "She knew how much I wanted that part!"

"Well, Beth wanted it, too," Rainbow commented softly. "Just as much as you did."

"But it's not fair!" I sputtered.

Rainbow put a hand on my arm and gently took the brush away from me.

"You're so covered in paint, you look like you have the measles," she laughed.

"Come on, let's go get cleaned up."

Once I had washed all the paint off, we went outside and waited for Beth to come out. When my friend emerged from the school, she gave me a hesitant look.

"I'm s-sorry you didn't ..." she started. Beth stutters when she's anxious.

"It's fine," I muttered.

"I mean, I'm thrilled I got the p-p-part, but ..."

"I would have gotten it if we'd had a fair tryout!" I couldn't help commenting with a scowl.

Beth put her hands on her hips and said, "Ha! You trip walking from one side of the room to the other!"

"You can't talk without stuttering!" I shot back.

"Th-that's not true!" she cried.

Beth had tears in her eyes now, and she wiped them away furiously. She started to say something, let out an exasperated sigh, and stomped away. Rainbow shook her head and hurried after my now ex-friend.





Beth and I spent the next few days in stony silence whenever we were in earshot of each other. Rainbow tried her best to get us to talk, but we both remained stubborn.

The Christmas play crept up quickly, and it was clear that our class was the most untalented group of kids you could put together. The scenery looked like a four-year-old had finger-painted it, and the actors all fumbled over their lines or forgot them altogether. The choir sang off-key, but that was O.K., because it drowned out Ms. Florence, who was pumping away at our ancient piano, peering at the musical notes, and forgetting her sharps and flats.

At one of our last rehearsals, I realized with triumph that Beth was no more talented than the rest of us. When she wasn't forgetting her lines, she spoke them so softly that no one could hear her. And as the angel, she had the most lines of anyone.



"As he walked down the street, he came across, a, um, little girl who ..." Beth stopped reciting, forgetting the rest of the line.

"...who sat on the street corner, warming herself with a tattered blanket," I finished from my spot in the choir, loud enough so everyone heard.

Beth turned bright red.

"That's enough, Melissa," Ms. Florence scolded me, then turned back to Beth.

"Please continue."

"Th-the girl had lost everything in a, uh, f-f-fire and now, um ..."

"...lived on the streets with only the clothes on her back and hope in her heart," I finished in a loud whisper.

Rainbow stomped on my foot and frowned at me. I glared at her, crossed my arms,

and turned to glare at Beth. Even though she couldn't speak one coherent sentence, she looked just like a real angel with curly gold hair. I tugged at my own brown braids and frowned harder.

The day of the play grew closer and closer, but Beth just got worse and worse, and she knew it. Half of me was glad, but the other half of me felt terrible.

The night before the performance, I walked through my front door, and my mom informed me I had a visitor. When I peeked in the room, there it was—the best gift in the world. Well, at least the best gift I'd ever received. On the couch lay the gorgeous angel costume. Beth, who stood nearby, shuffled her feet before speaking.

"I talked it over with Ms. Florence, and I want you to have the part of the angel." Beth looked at our ugly living room rug, not at me. "You were right. I can't speak one sentence without stuttering."

A tear fell from her eye. I glanced at the dress, then back at her. I shook my head, then forced myself to say it.

"No, I was . . . I was wrong. I shouldn't have gotten so mad at you." I bit my lip. "I'm really sorry."

"It doesn't matter now, anyway," Beth murmured. "I can't learn all those lines by tomorrow night."

"You can if I have anything to say about it," I said. She stared at me with raised eyebrows. "Hand me your script," I ordered with a grin. "We have work to do!"

"I don't know if I can do this," Beth whispered the next night. "You know those lines backward and forward," I assured her. "And if you get stage fright, just think of me tripping over my feet." Beth grinned weakly, then took a deep breath as we all took our places. She stepped forward, the light catching her sparkly costume, making her glow like a real angel.

"The story you are about to hear has an important lesson each of us should know," she recited. "It t-t-teaches us a-about . . ."

I held my breath as she stopped and glanced at me nervously. I flailed my arms, as if I was about to fall over.





Beth grinned at me and continued. "It teaches us about compassion, hope—" she looked at me again with a smile—"and friendship."

The rest of the play went off without a hitch (if you don't count Ms. Florence's piano playing), and when we all came out to bow, Beth stuck her wire halo on my head. I whispered in her ear, "Don't get too comfortable in those wings—'cause this angel has talent!"

"You? An angel?" Beth answered in mock horror.

We both burst into giggles as the halo slid off my ear and onto the stage. ★

Meet the Author



Hillary C.

I can completely relate to Beth's stage fright. I once dropped out of ballet class because we had to perform on-stage at the end of the year. I wish there had been someone like Mel to cheer me on!

Hillary C., age 14, lives in New Hampshire.

Honorable mentions go to:

Jessica E.
age 12, Missouri

Marilyn H.
age 11, Colorado

Lorien M.
age 12, New Mexico

Amanda J.
age 13, Minnesota

Madeline F.
age 13, Ohio

Kaitlin S.
age 12, Virginia

New Story Contest!

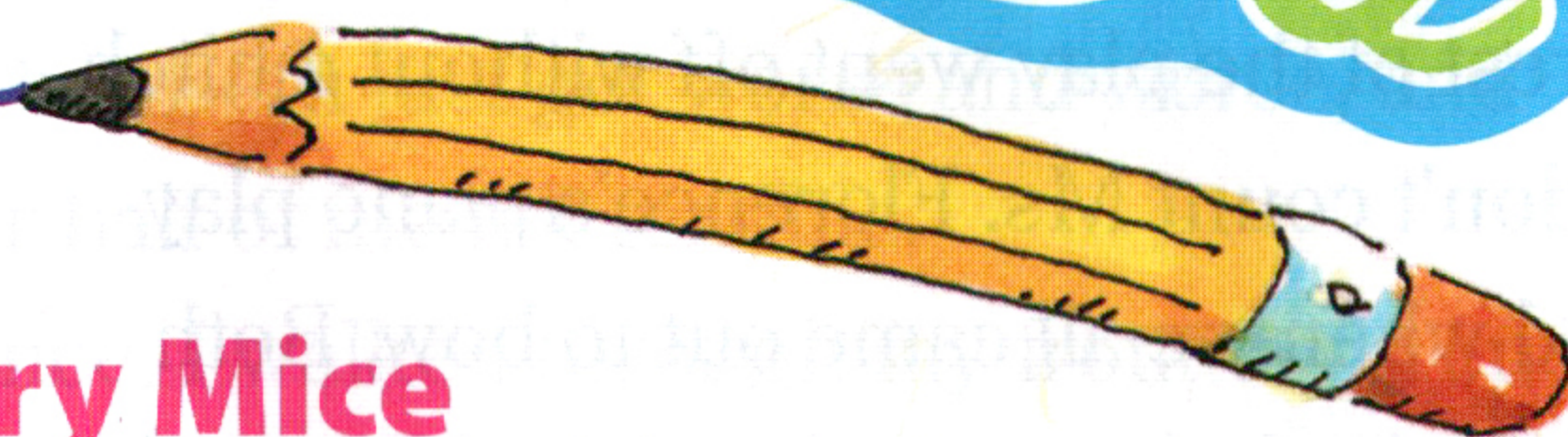
It's time for another story contest. Here are the rules:

- 1** This time, we want your sequel to your favorite fairy tale. What happens next to Cinderella and her nasty stepsisters? Does Little Red Riding Hood become an animal trainer? What do the dwarfs think of Snow White's new boyfriend?
- 2** Include your first and last name, address, phone number, and birth date. You and your parent must sign your story, stating that you made it up.
- 3** Your story shouldn't be longer than five handwritten pages or three typed pages.
- 4** Mail your story to the address on page 2 by December 10. Winners will appear in the September/October 2005 issue.



Brainwaves

activities and puzzles



Merry Mice

28 mice

When the cat's away, the mice cause pandemonium!

How many mice can you find in this toy store?



Photo Fun

Circle the matching pair of photos of Abigail H., age 12, and Daisy, from Maryland.



A



B



C



D



E



F



G

Send a **print** of your fun or funny photo to **Brain Waves** and maybe we'll use it in a **puzzle**. Write to the address on **page 2**. Sorry, photos can't be returned.

Peppermint Twister

See if you correctly answer all five questions about this jar of candy canes.



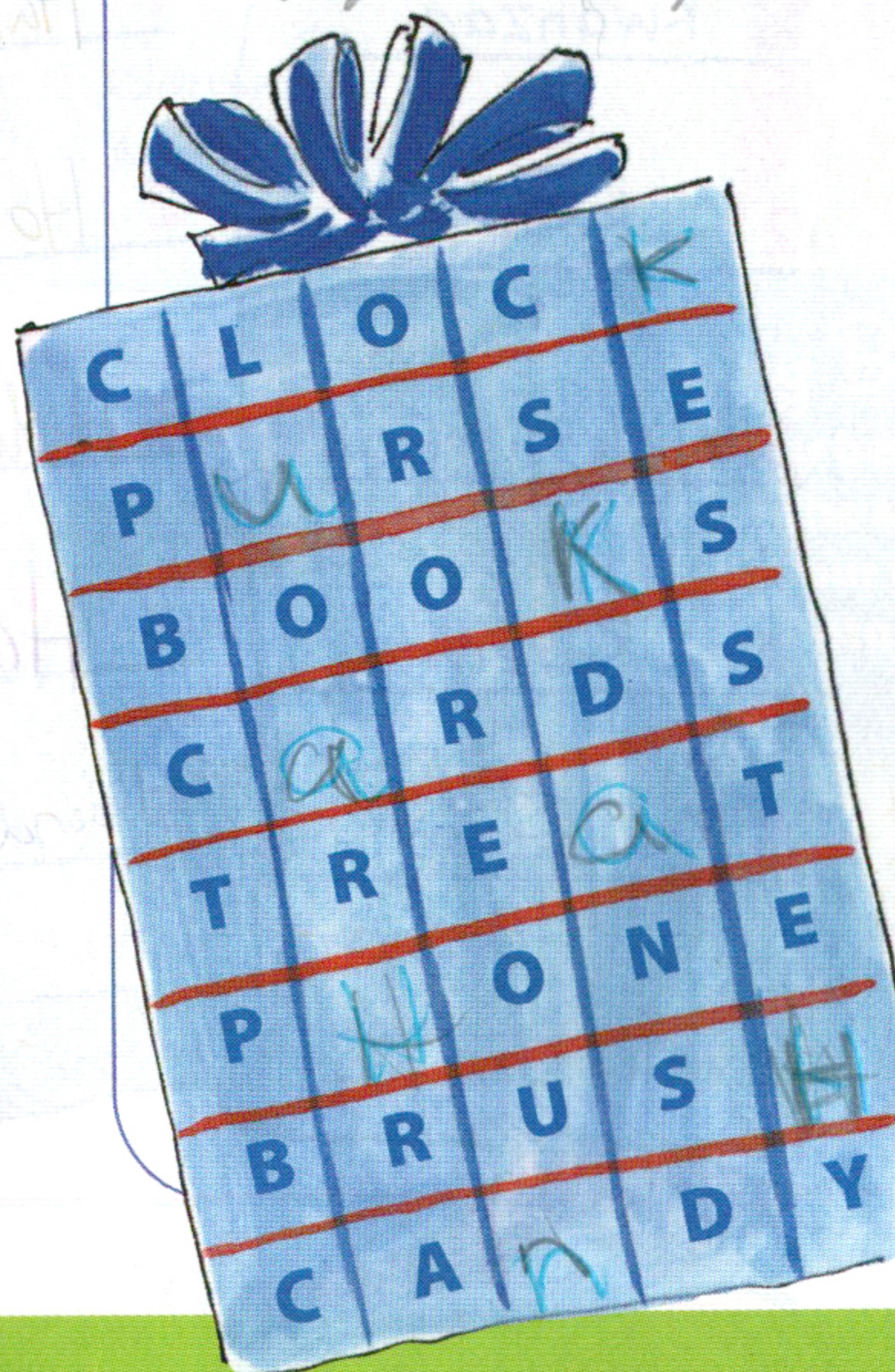
- 1 Which candy cane is the shortest?
- 2 Which is the thickest?
- 3 Which two match exactly?
- 4 Which one has the fewest stripes?
- 5 Which has different colored stripes?

For Me!

Using each letter from "Hanukkah" and "Christmas" only once, fill in the blocks to find the presents inside.

HANUKKAH

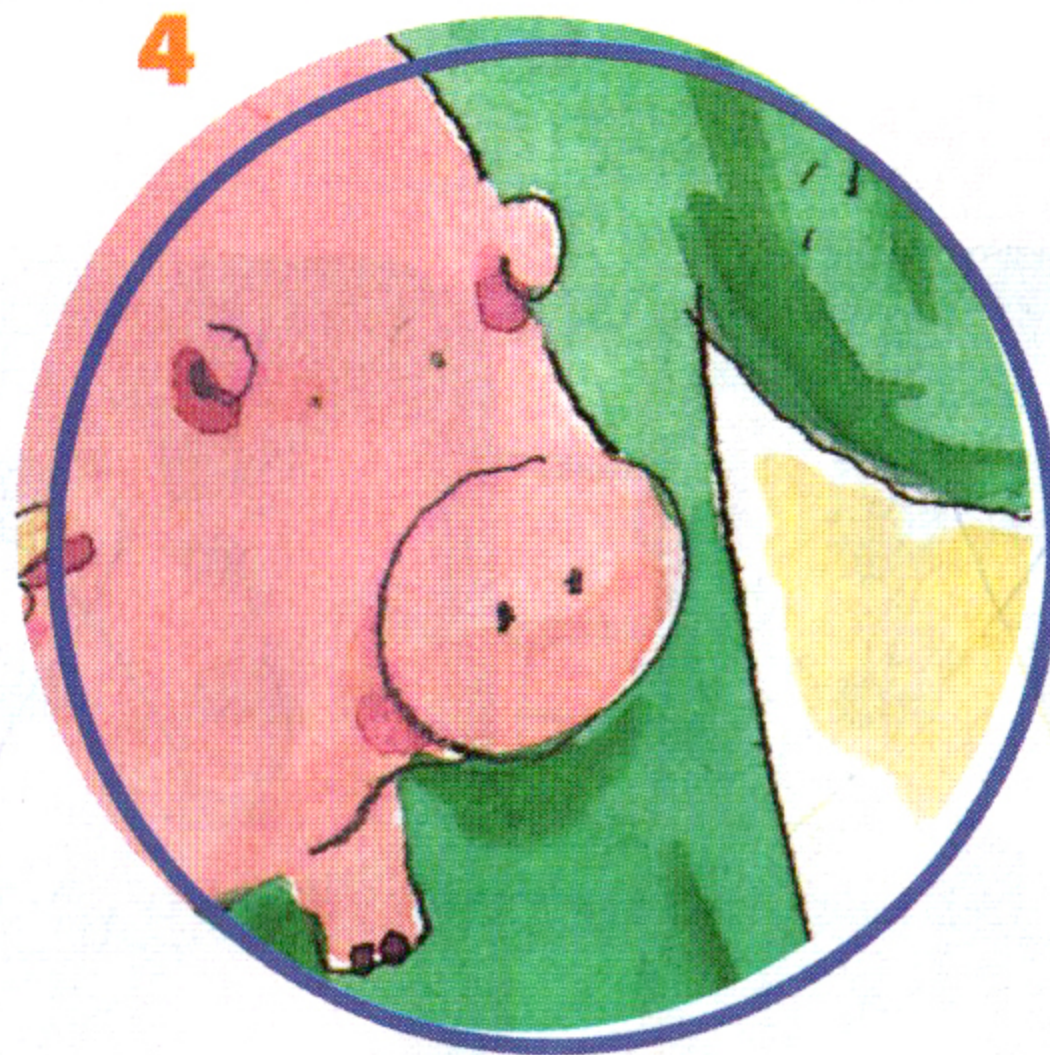
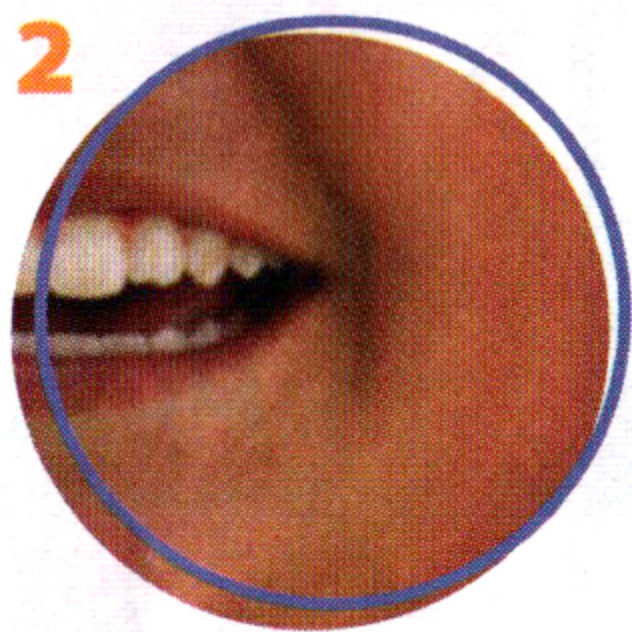
CHRISTMAS



Art Sleuth

Search the pages of this issue to find where each snippet of the photo or illustration

shown below came from. Write down the page number where you found it.



1 25

3 25 21

2 29

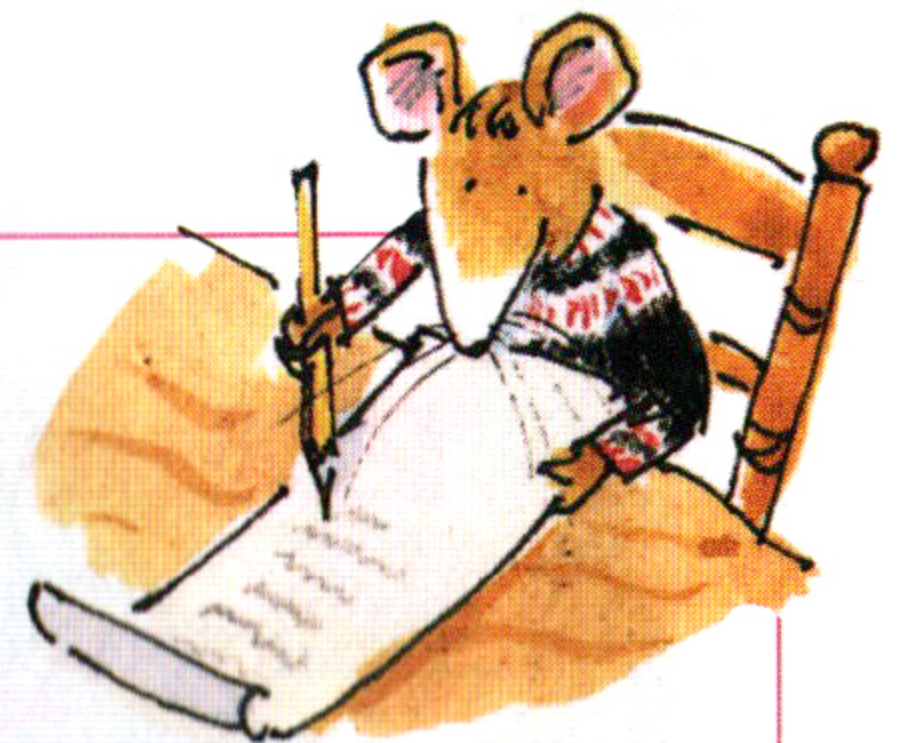
4 11



Holiday Lists



Find a word that fits into each category and begins with the letter shown across the top. We've done one letter for you.



1 Winter holiday

2 Rhymes with snow

3 Game

4 Country

5 Furry animal



1 Kwanzaa

2 know

3 Kick the Can

4 Korea

5 kangaroo



1 Halloween

2 Ho

3 Hide and Seek

4 Holand

5 Hand dog



1 Christmas

2 co

3 chracles

4 california

5 cow



1 Thanksgiving

2 tee

3 Tuff and Soft

4 Time land

5 tiger

Leettr form Hmoe

Did you know...if the first and last letters of a word are in place, you can read that word—even when the other letters are scrambled? See how quickly you can read this letter to Santa “Claws.”

Daer Snata Cawls,

Tihs yaer I wlud lvoe to see a big blal of yran udenr my tere. Any coolr is fnie. All my fenirds hvae yran, and all I hvae is a pceie of sinrtg taht I fonud udenr the sfoa. I've lfet you smoe mlik in a bwol, in csae you are thstiry.

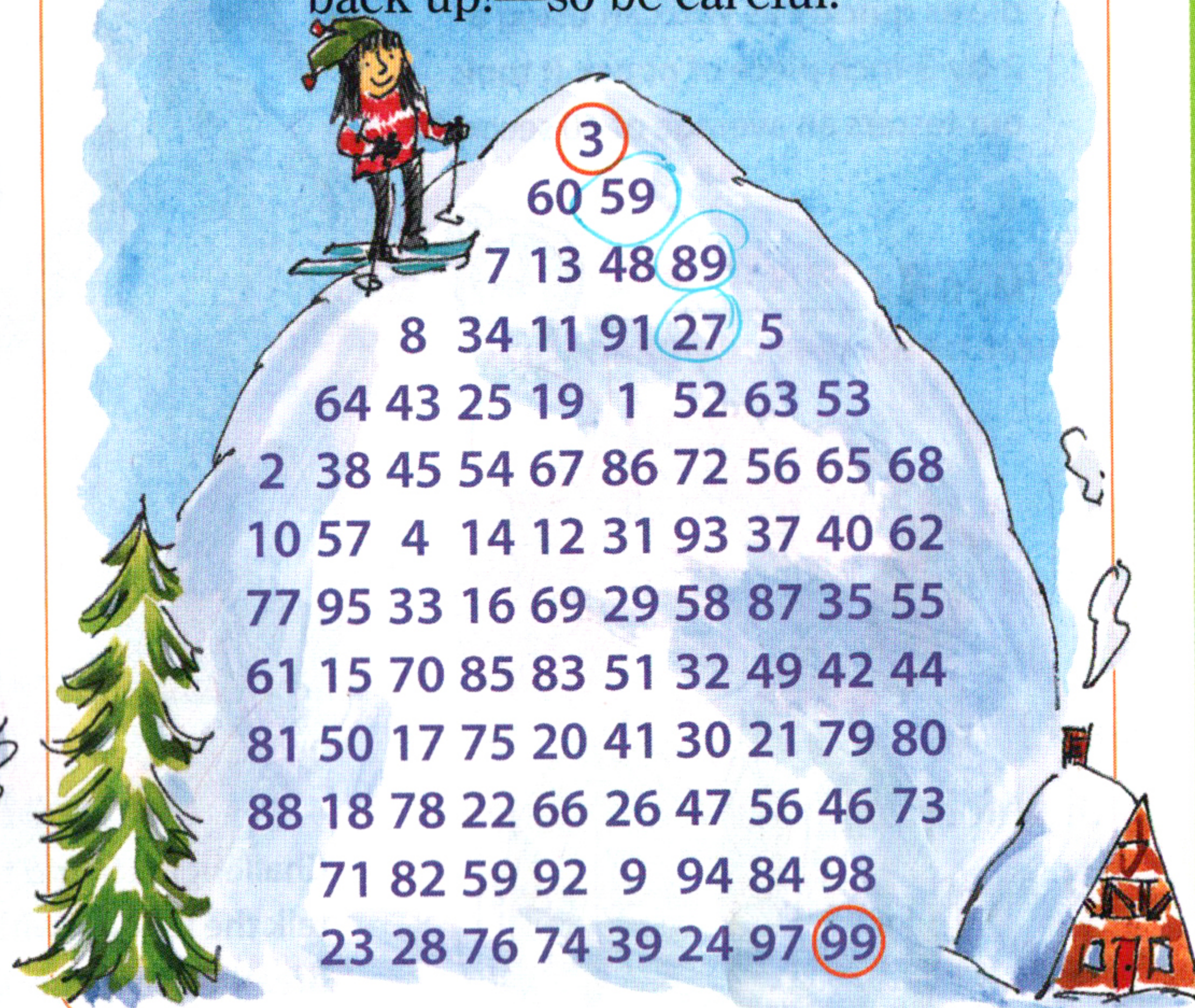
Lvoe, Ktity

P.S. If yuo're out of yran, a scile of chsee wuld be ncie, too!



Whee!

To help the skier find shelter, follow the path of numbers divisible by 3. (Keep a calculator handy!) You may go in any direction—even back up!—so be careful.



Laffateria

What do you call people who are afraid of Santa?



Claustrophobic!

Elizabeth J.
Age 13, Wisconsin

What do you get when you cross cheese with a winter holiday?



A Merry Swissmas!

Jamie S.
Age 12, Indiana

What do Santa's helpers learn at school in the North Pole?



The Elfabet!

Kelser H.
Age 8, Wisconsin

Why does Scrooge love reindeer?



Because every buck is dear to him.

Maranda W.
Age 13, Oklahoma

What did the big furry hat say to the warm woolly scarf?



You hang around while I go on a head!

Esha R.
Age 9, Wisconsin

Funny Business

Send your best joke to Brain Waves! Write to the address on page 2. Include your name, birth date, school photo, and signature.



Can You Do It?

"Gift" these challenges a try!

Gift Wrap

How quickly can you wrap a very tiny gift? Try it! Wrap a game die as quickly as you can using a 2-by-3-inch piece of paper. It took our testers an average of 40 seconds!

My time: _____



Gift of Gab

Challenge a friend to see who can talk the longest without taking a breath. Challenge: Don't use "uh" or "um" when talking.

Best gabber: _____

Gift Grab

Divide into two teams. Give each team a large bag and a pair of oversized gloves. Write each player's name on a wrapped gift box and slip it into her team's bag. On "Go!" a player from each team puts on the gloves, finds a gift with her name on it, opens it, returns the gloves to the bag, then passes the bag to the next player. The first team to open all its gifts wins. Challenge: Double wrap the gifts.

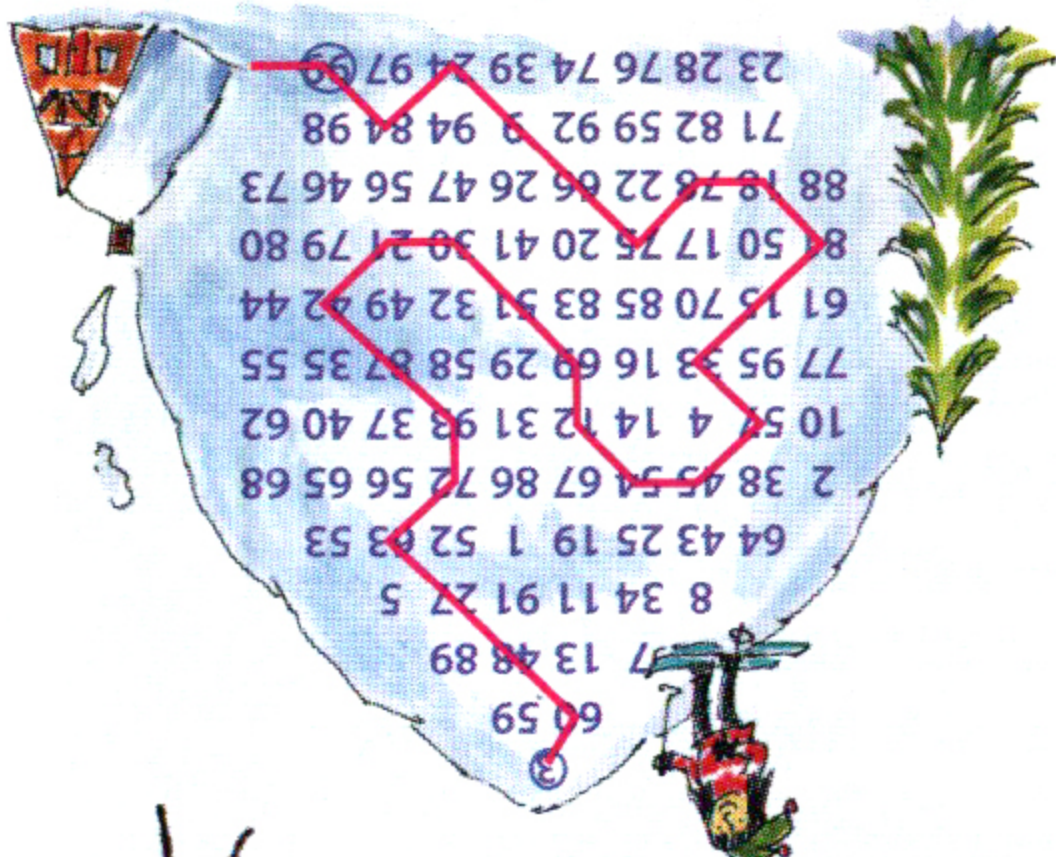
Fastest team: _____



Answer Box

Buzzword

Pandemonium is used on page 38.



Wheel

1. page 24; 2. page 29;
3. page 21; 4. page 11

Art Sleuth



Tinsel Towns

The fake town is Mistletoe, Oregon.

Pursuit 4, Turkey 5, tiger

T: 1. Thanksgiving 2. toe 3. Trivial

2. crow 3. Clue 4. Canada 5. cat

4. Hungary 5. hamster C: 1. Christmas

H: 1. Hanukkah 2. hoe 3. Hot Potato

Your answers may differ.

Holiday Lists

watch, radio, shirt, gloss, charm

Christmas: shoes, games, plant, scarf,

cards, treat, phone, brush, candy;

Hanukkah: clock, purse, books,

For Me!

Peppermint Twister

1. F 2. A 3. B and D 4. E 5. C

Letters D and E

Photo Fun



There are 38 mice!

Merry Mice

HELP!

Dear American Girl,

Christmas is rolling around. When I receive a gift that I don't like, how can I be polite without lying and saying I really like it?

polite

You don't have to lie to be polite.

If the gift is some kind of clothing, you could say something positive about the color. If it's homemade, you could say how nice it was of the giver to make it for you. If it's just plain weird, you can say you've never seen anything like it. And for any gift at all, you can—and should—say, "Thank you for thinking of me!"



Dear American Girl,

Two of my good friends are running for vice president of student council. The day before the election, they gave speeches on why we should vote for them. The girl I was going to vote for didn't give a very convincing speech. Should I still vote for her or not?

Who for V.P.?

It's a mistake to make up your mind about who to vote for before you get all the information. Keep an open mind until you've learned some-



thing about each candidate. When you vote, choose the person you think would be the very best vice president—even if you used to think you'd vote for someone else.



Dear American Girl,

When I'm down in the dumps, how can I cheer myself up?

gloomy

If you're feeling blah, get moving. Even a walk around your neighborhood could help perk you up. Better yet, invite a friend along. Sharing what's on your mind can make you feel better. Other ideas: watch a funny movie, play with a pet, or read a book of comic strips for a few laughs. The best way of all to cheer up? Help a friend or family member who's feeling blue. Focusing on someone else will take

your mind off your own problems and make you feel good inside.



Dear American Girl,

I love my cousins, but when we're together I'm the butt of every joke. When I say, "Please stop," they just keep doing it. I get mad, and then they say they're sorry. But guess what? As soon as I feel better, they make fun of me again. How can I get them to stop?

Very helpless

Chances are, teasing is just your cousins' way of having fun. That doesn't make it any less aggravating, though. For your cousins, the fun comes from getting a reaction out of you. Try not to give them one. If they call you a nickname you don't like, just roll your eyes. If they make fun of your stuff or the things you like to do, act as mature as you can and let it roll off your back. But if they say something truly hurtful, call them on it. Say, "I know you think it's funny, but it hurts my feelings when you say those things." That should put a stop to the teasing. If it doesn't, then get a parent involved.

MORE HELP!

Dear American Girl,

I don't have anyone to play with at recess. I am very lonely and shy, and it's hard to make friends. It seems that everyone in my class has a friend except me. Can you help me?

Friendless in School

Sometimes it's easier to get in on a group activity than to join a pair of friends. If you see a bunch of kids playing a game, just ask, "Can I play, too?" You can also be the one to start something fun. Bring a ball or game to play with, and invite a few kids to join you. When you see someone who looks like she could be a friend, it's up to you to start a conversation. Smile, speak up, and be brave. There are friends for you out there—you just have to find them.



Dear American Girl,

I really have a problem with fidgeting. I fidget at restaurants and in the car. In class, I'm constantly playing with my hair, tapping my pencil, or squirming in my seat. I've tried to stop, but nothing works. What do I do?

Ants in my Pants

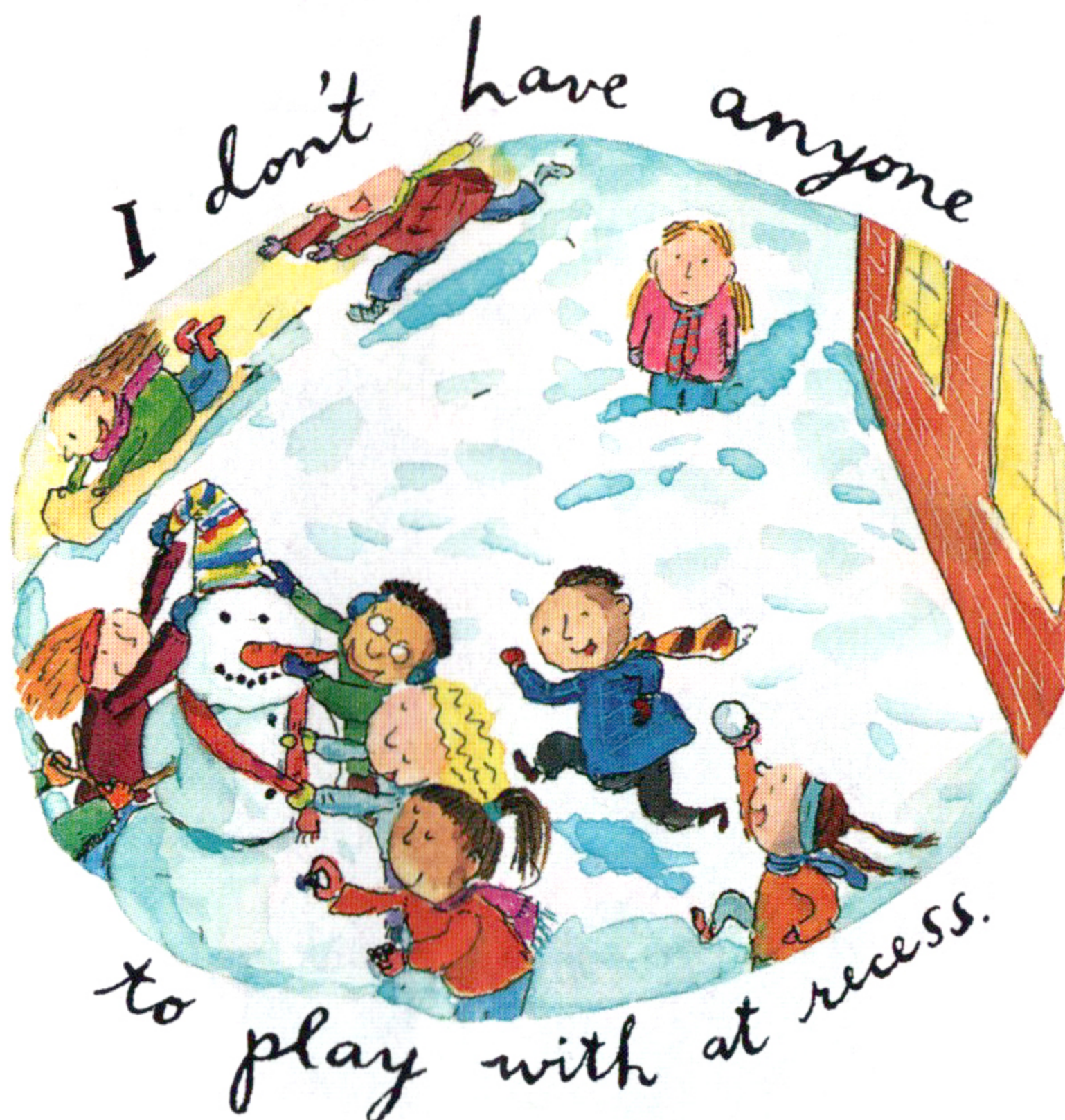


Figure out why you fidget. Do you have too much energy? If so, get more exercise every day to tire yourself out. Don't drink any caffeine, and limit how much sugar you eat. If you fidget because you're bored, plan ahead. Bring a book or activity to keep you busy in the car or when you're stuck somewhere. Fidgeting can also just be a bad habit. In class, sit still and really concentrate on what the teacher is saying. Try taking notes instead of squirming. If you still find yourself fidgeting all the time, talk about it with your doctor.



Dear American Girl,

There's a boy in my class who draws really well. I draw well, too, but I feel like we're competing. What can I do?

Artistic Girl

Competition can be a good thing if it helps you do your best work. But if competing is taking the fun out of art for you, you should put a stop to it. The world has room for lots of artists. You and this boy can *both* be good drawers without either of you being the "best." Focus on the type of drawing you like to do and come up with your own style. Draw as much as you can, and most of all, enjoy yourself! And if this boy tries to make you feel inferior, say, "You draw your way, and I draw my way. I think they're both good."



Advice from You

"When I don't want to eat any more candy, but I can't stop, I brush my teeth. It works! It sort of makes my sweet tooth take a nap."

Sarah D.
Age 13, California

Need advice? Got advice? Write:
Help!

American Girl magazine

8400 Fairway Place

Middleton, WI 53562



We tried a lot of different looks on Jordan for our latest cover. Do you like the one we chose? Vote for your favorite at "Fun for Girls" at americangirl.com.

Where's Gibson?

In the March/April issue of AG we told you about Gibson, who was being trained to be a Seeing Eye dog. At the end of the story, we still didn't know if Gibson had passed his tests. The bad news is that he did not become a guide dog, but the good news is that he is back with Katie and Alexa.



Behind the Scenes

Look at all of the fun we uncovered during the making of this issue!

We got a kick out of reading your stories about the worst gifts ever! Here are some of our favorite bad gifts:

A miniature hair dryer

An ugly, green singing duck

Make-your-own wart remover

A maroon sweater with olive-colored elves prancing around

North Pole or South Pole?

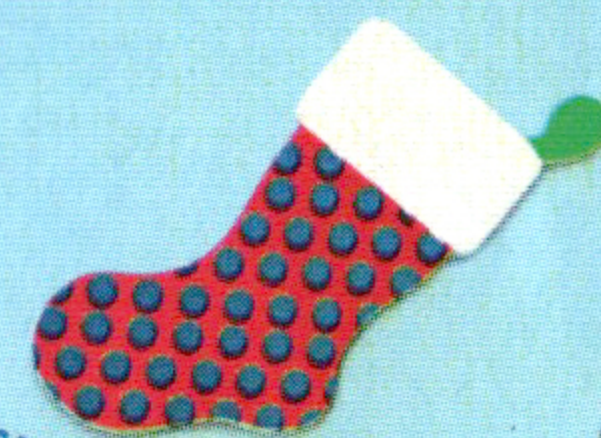
Lysee is an expert on the North and South Poles, considering she's been to both! Take our quiz at "Fun for Girls" at americangirl.com to see how brilliant you are when it comes to these chilly locations.



To: AG Readers

From: AG Staff

Design your own gift tags for the crafts you made in this issue. Go to "Fun for Girls" at americangirl.com for the tag template.



For more ho-ho-holiday cheer, go to "Fun for Girls" at americangirl.com.

A Mysterious Story

Can you solve it?

American Girl

Coming up in the January/February issue



Sweet Hearts

Make the prettiest Valentine craft you've ever seen!



The Truth About Adoption

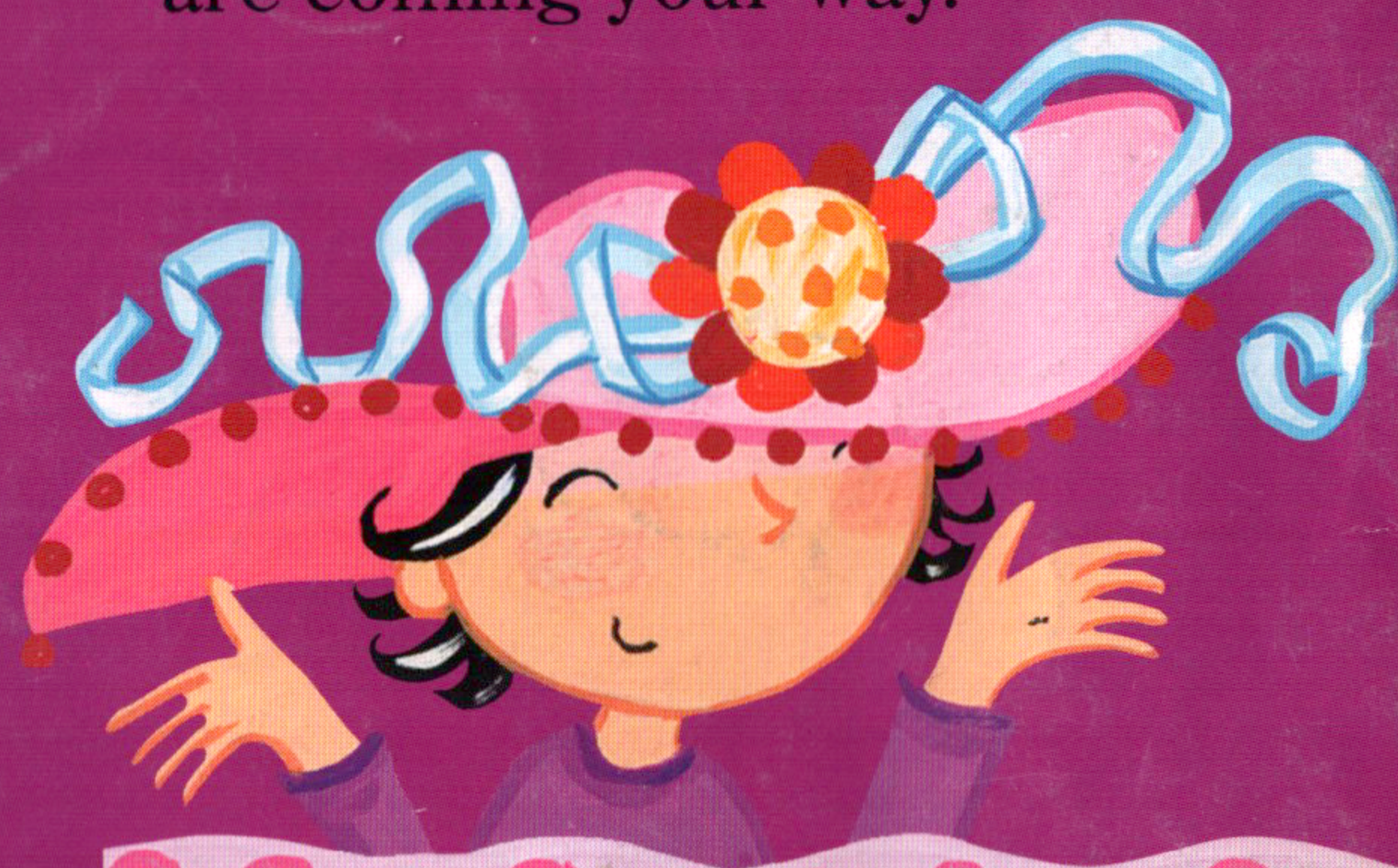
Girls who have been adopted answer your questions about what it's like.

"But she started it!"

Tips on how to stop fighting with your siblings

Heads Up!

The winners of our design-a-hat contest are coming your way.



For more fun, visit
americangirl.com!
Make your own
wrapping paper
and cards!

Crazy for Cocoa?

Our chocolate party will make your mouth water!

